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Volume 37, Number 5

MAY 1974

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### THE COVER:

The grandeur of the canyonlands below Dead Horse Point State Park, in southern Utah, is captured at sunrise by David Muench, of Santa Barbara, California.

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## A Peek in the Publisher's Poke

**S**PRING, ONE of the desert's best seasons, has been especially enjoyable this year. Late rains and an early warm spell combined to produce a wonderful array of wildflowers. Reports from California's Anza-Borrego State Park cite great displays of verbena, sunflower, coreopsis and desert lily. These are at their peak at press time (April 4), but should last for several weeks.

In Antelope Valley, their annual Wildflower Show runs through May 5 and the sponsors, the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, anticipate record crowds in spite of the energy crisis. See related article by Mary Frances Strong on Page 36.

Regarding the energy crisis, I have a few cheery notes for summer vacation planners. In discussing the gasoline shortage with concessionaires on Lake Powell (see article, Page 24), I was assured that gas for both auto and boat is available, and the Tourist Division of the New Mexico Department of Development has installed a hotline, toll-free, for prospective tourists to call for factual up-to-the-minute information on where to buy gasoline in the state. Although the principal use of the line will be to give information on gasoline supplies, it will also provide tourist information on upcoming festivals, rodeos and other events. The toll-free number is 1-800-545-9876. It is hoped that other states may soon join to form a region network.

What's that I hear? I do believe folks are whistling, "In the good old summer time!"

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "William Kuyper". The signature is stylized with long, sweeping lines.



# Desert Magazine Book Shop

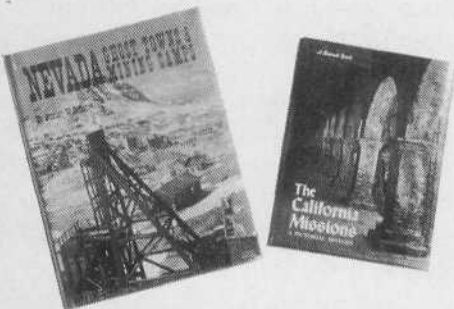
**THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTHWEST** by the Editors of *Sunset* books. A pictorial with a brief text showing modern day activities of cities such as Phoenix, El Paso, Taos, and communities below the Mexican border, and covering the Southwestern states, canyons and deserts. 240 photographs of which 47 are four-color, large format, 223 pages, hardcover, \$10.95.

**THE OREGON DESERT** by E. R. Jackman and R. A. Long. Filled with both facts and anecdotes, this is the only book on the little but fascinating deserts of Oregon. Anyone who reads this book will want to visit the areas—or wish they could. Hardcover, illustrated, 407 pages, \$7.50.

**SOUTHERN IDAHO GHOST TOWNS** by Wayne Sparling. 84 ghost towns are described, along with the history and highlights of each. The author has visited these sites by pickup, 4WD and by foot. 95 photographs accompany the text, and maps detail the location of the camps. An excellent reference to add to the libraries of those fascinated by Western history. Paperback, 135 pages, \$3.95.

**THE CALIFORNIA MISSIONS** by the Editors of *Sunset* Books. A beautifully written history of California's 21 missions. One can feel, as he reads, the fervor of the padres as they gathered materials to build their churches, and an insight into history develops as the authors tell in simple prose what was going on in the world at the same time. 300 pages, complete with artful sketches and photographs, and paintings in color, hardcover, large format, \$12.75.

**NEVADA GHOST TOWNS AND MINING CAMPS** by Stanley W. Paher. Covering all of Nevada's 17 counties, Paher has documented 575 mining camps, many of which have been erased from the earth. The book contains the greatest and most complete collection of historic photographs of Nevada ever published. This, coupled with his excellent writing and map, creates a book of lasting value. Large 9x11 format, 700 photographs, hardcover, 492 pages, \$15.00.



**100 DESERT WILDFLOWERS** by Natt Dodge. Each flower is illustrated with a 4-color photograph and described in detail, where found, blooming period, etc. Habitats from sea level to 4,000 feet. Slick paperback, 64 pages, \$2.00.

**100 ROADSIDE WILDFLOWERS** by Natt Dodge. A companion book and with the same format as *100 Desert Wildflowers*, this book lists 100 flowers found from 4,000 to 7,000-foot levels. Also has 4-color photographs. Slick paperback, 64 pages, \$2.00.

**A FIELD GUIDE TO WESTERN REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS** by Robert C. Stebbins. A Peterson Field guide. 207 species, 569 illustrations, 185 in full color, 192 maps. The best book of this type. Hardcover, \$5.95.

**CALIFORNIA, An Illustrated History** by T. H. Watkins. This 400-year epic of the Golden State, from the coming of the Spaniards to our challenging present, is not only colorful in historical fact, but in the many illustrations of the old and the new in picture and art form. It is considered the most beautiful and comprehensive pictorial treatment the history of California has ever received. Hardcover, 450 illustrations, 544 pages, limited quantity at special price of \$20.00.

**DICTIONARY OF PREHISTORIC INDIAN ARTIFACTS OF THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST** by Franklin Barnett. A highly informative book that both illustrates and describes Indian artifacts of the Southwest, it is a valuable guide for the person interested in archaeology and anthropology. Includes 250 major types of artifacts. Each item has a photo and definition. Paperback, 130 pages, beautifully illustrated, \$7.95.

**BALLARAT\*** Compiled by Paul Hubbard, Doris Bray and George Pipkin. Ballarat, now a ghost town in the Panamint Valley, was once a flourishing headquarters during the late 1880s and 1900s for the prospectors who searched for silver and gold in that desolate area of California. The authors tell of the lives and relate anecdotes of the famous old-timers. First published in 1965, this reprinted edition is an asset to any library. Paperback, illustrated, 98 pages, \$3.00.

**HOPI SILVER, The History and Hallmarks of Hopi Silversmithing** by Margaret Wright. Years of research have made this book a historically descriptive piece on the Hopi silversmiths. Illustrated with many photographs of silverwork, and more than a dozen pages devoted to the various hallmarks beginning in 1890 and continued through 1971, naming the silversmith, the clan, the village, dates worked and whether or not the silverwork is still being made. Paperback, 100 pages, \$4.95.

**HOW TO COLLECT ANTIQUE BOTTLES** by John C. Tibbits. A fascinating insight of early America as seen through the eyes of the medicine companies and their advertising almanacs. Excellent book for avid bottle collectors and those just starting. Also includes chapters on collecting, locations and care of bottles. Heavy, slick paperback, well illus., 118 pages, \$4.00.

**BEACHES OF BAJA** by Walt Wheelock. Beaches on the Pacific side of Lower California are described by the veteran Baja explorer. Unlike California beaches, they are still relatively free of crowds. Paperback, illus., 72 pages, \$1.95.

**TEMALPAKH** by Lowell John Bean and Katherine Siva Saubel. Temalpakh means "from the earth," in Cahuilla, and covers the many uses of plants used for food, medicine, rituals and those used in the manufacturing of baskets, sandals, hunting tools; and plants used for dwellings. Makes for a better understanding of environmental and cultural relationships. Well illustrated, 225 pages, hardcover, \$10.00; paperback, \$6.50.

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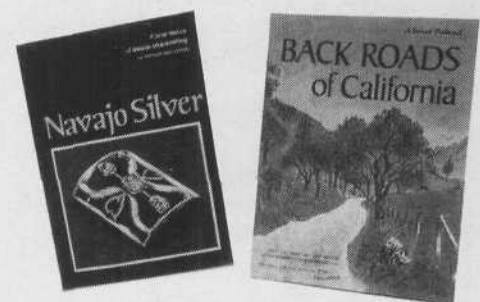
**BACK ROADS OF CALIFORNIA** by Earl Tholander and the Editors of *Sunset* Books. Early stagecoach routes, missions, remote canyons, old prospector cabins, mines, cemeteries, etc., are visited as the author travels and sketches the California Backroads. Through maps and notes, the traveler is invited to get off the freeways and see the rural and country lanes throughout the state. Hardcover, large format, unusually beautiful illustrations, 207 pages, \$8.95.

**RELICS OF THE WHITEMAN** by Marvin and Helen Davis. A logical companion to *Relics of the Redman*, this book brings out a marked difference by showing in its illustrations just how "suddenly modern" the early West became after the arrival of the white man. The difference in artifacts typifies the historical background in each case. The same authors tell how and where to collect relics of these early days, tools needed, and how to display and sell valuable pieces. Paperback, well illustrated in color and b/w, 63 pages, \$3.95.

**SELDOM SEEN SLIM** by Tom Murray. Profiles and vignettes of the colorful "single blanket jackass prospectors" who lived and died as they looked for gold and silver in Death Valley. Slick paperback, exclusive photos of the old-timers, 65 pages, \$3.00.

**THREE PATHS ALONG A RIVER** by Tom Hudson. The San Luis Rey River in California's San Diego County played an important part in the history of the West. Dramatic account of the Indians, Spaniards and Americans who settled the area. Hardcover, 239 pages, \$6.00.

**NAVAJO SILVER** by Arthur Woodward. A summary of the history of silversmithing by the Navajo tribe, Woodward presents a comprehensive view of the four major influences on Navajo design, showing how the silversmiths adapted the art forms of European settlers and Indians in the eastern United States, as well as those of the Spanish and Mexican colonists of the Southwest. Paperback, well illustrated, 100 pages, \$4.95.



**TIMBERLINE ANCIENTS** with photos by David Muench and text by Darwin Lambert. Bristlecone pines are the oldest living trees on earth. Photographer David Muench brings them to life in all their fascinating forms, and Lambert's prose is like poetry. One of the most beautiful pictorials ever published. An ideal gift. Large 11x14 format, hardcover, heavy slick paper, 128 4-color photographs, 125 pages, \$22.00.

**THE MAN WHO WALKED THROUGH TIME** by Colin Fletcher. An odyssey of a man who lived simply and in solitude for two months as he hiked through the Grand Canyon. Combining his physical prowess with Thoreau-like observations, the author has written a book of great magnitude. Hardcover, illustrated, 239 pages, \$6.95.

# JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT

JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT is what "Family Fun In Joshua Tree" is about. The interesting and educational format is designed to make every member of the family aware of the natural surroundings of this favorite Southern California attraction. In addition, the mile-by-mile tour guide helps you make sure you don't miss any of the points of interest in the Monument. Quizzes and games to keep the little ones entertained. \$1.25 per copy (Calif. residents add 5% sales tax) . . . a "must" for the Monument visitor and a great gift for the "armchair" traveler.



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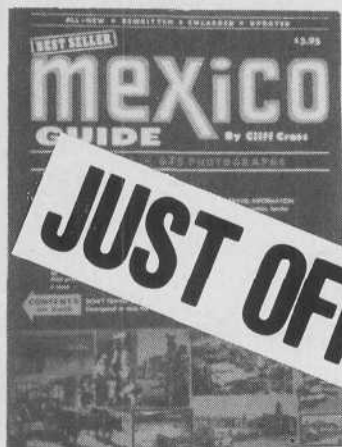
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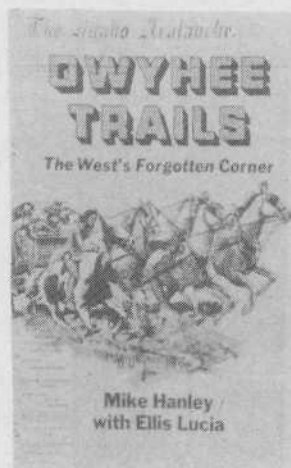
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## Books for Desert Readers



OWYHEE TRAILS

By Mike Hanley and Ellis Lucia

The vast region of the Owyhee Mountains, sometimes called the I-O-N, where Idaho, Oregon and Nevada come together, is a land of tall peaks, jagged canyons, ranges and deserts. Very little is known about this area except by people who live there, and travelers, hurrying

through, declare, "there's nothing but jack rabbits and rattlesnakes." How wrong they are.

Once the scene of great gold and silver strikes, second only to the great Comstock, thousands of treasure hunters swarmed over the Owyhees, seeking their fortunes, and with the rushes came the saloons, bawdy houses, gamblers and lawlessness that became a way of life. Stagecoach hold-ups, Indian skirmishes with U.S. Cavalry, mining company wars, all were part of the chaotic bedlam that took place in this remote territory, once known only to the Indians.

The ranchers played another important part in the Owyhees, staking their claims to the rich grasslands in the valleys below. The mines played out, but rugged individualism remained, and you will meet such memorable characters as cattleman Dave Shirk, who drove Longhorns from Texas into trouble with Pete Finch; Colonel William Dewey, who was determined to gain immortality by "owning" a town; Hill Beachy, stage-man, detective and a father of the Vigilantes. There's also the gentle story of Sara Winnemucca, ahead of her time in her vision for her people, and the legend of Bigfoot, the outlaw, and many more.

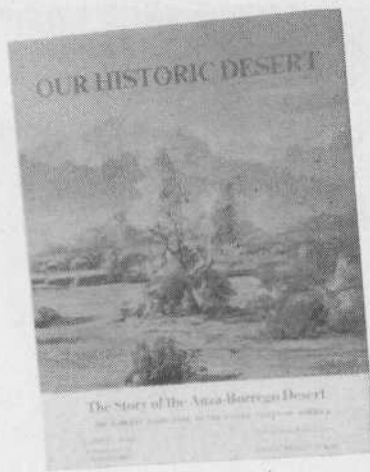
Rancher Mike Hanley, who has been working the tailings of this once bustling and little-known territory, is unique for his time and place. While many of his generation outwardly reject the past as "dead and gone," Mike has developed an intense interest in and knowledge of what went on in his region and in the Pacific Northwest. He believes that preservation of this heritage is most important. He has lived and breathed Western history, both fact and legend, all of his life as a fourth generation descendant of the celebrated Hanley family of Oregon who first settled in the 1850s. Since the age of nine, Mike's father took him along on the cattle drives and round-ups. He camped, ate, slept and rode with the buckeroos, among them grizzled old-timers whose memories extended back to the wild days of the roaring frontier towns, the Indian wars and the gold and silver strikes. Night after night, he heard the buckeroos swap yarns and tall tales, and during long winter evenings, Mike heard more stories from his parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Even at a tender age, he began noting down



some of the stories, and has been doing it ever since.

Mike has explored on horseback most of the Owyhee back country of old mines, Indian encampments, military forts, stage roads and caves. He has found Indian and pioneer writings on the faces of high bluffs and camped where cavalry troopers had bedded down. Now he has teamed with Ellis Lucia, noted Pacific Northwest author, to tell for the first time the full story of the Owyhees, in what is a unique slice of Western Americana which fills a void in the historical shelves of the Old West.

Hardcover, profusely illustrated, 314 pages, \$7.95.



**OUR HISTORIC DESERT**  
Text by Diana Lindsay  
Edited by Richard Pourade

Another excellent presentation in the fine Copley tradition, *Our Historic Desert* is the story of the Anza Borrego Desert, the largest state park in the United States.

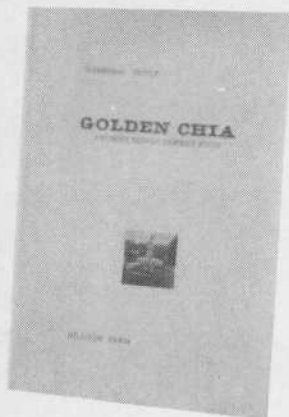
An introduction by Editor Richard Pourade explains how the book presents a concise and cogent history of the things which have made this desert unique, and throughout maintains the desert mystique—that undefinable quality that can represent either a sunset or the now-stilled echoes of axes wielded more than a century ago by strong and determined Americans who literally carved a passage through Box Canyon.

That introduction sets the mood as the author details the geologic beginning and traces the history. From Juan Bautista de Anza and early-day cattlemen and settlers, through to the existence today of the huge state park, an enormous amount of information has been chronicled. The author sums it all up this way:

"The Anza-Borrego Desert has been, and will continue to be, many things to many people. In addition to its beauty, romance and mystery, it is a home, an outdoor laboratory and school, a playground and refuge, a source of wealth, a place of quiet enchantment and a battleground for developers and environmentalists.

But more importantly, it is a trust for future generations of people who will find their own special relationship with our historic desert."

Hardcover, 144 pages, beautifully illustrated with black and white and four-color photos, \$9.50.



**GOLDEN CHIA**  
Ancient Indian Energy Food  
By Harrison Doyle

The story of *Golden Chia*, the ancient Indian high energy protein food, is thoroughly covered by authority Harrison Doyle, as well as other nutritive tips on vitamins, proteins, enzymes, the nutritive, medicinal and potency powers of seeds, and "how to live rationally."

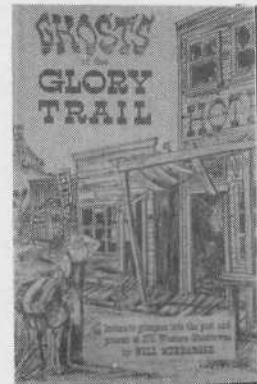
Author Doyle has included chapters on How to Identify *Columbaria Chia*; How to Prepare It As a Food; *Chia* in Honey; How *Chia* Was Used By the Aborigines as Medicine; How to Plant and Start *Chia*; What You Should Know About the Vitamins, Proteins and Enzymes, and, in general, how to obtain good health, vitality and energy.

The difference between the desert *chia* and the Mexican variety, *Salvia Hispanica*, is illustrated, and Mr. Doyle identifies the energy-factor, a little known trace mineral found only in the high desert seeds.

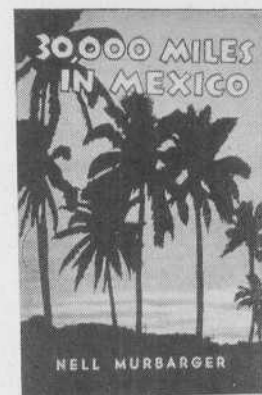
100 pages, illustrated. Paperback, \$4.75; cloth cover, \$7.75.

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## Two Great Books by Nell Murbarger



**GHOSTS OF THE GLORY TRAIL** by Nell Murbarger. A pioneer of the ghost town explorers and writers, Miss Murbarger's followers will be glad to know this book is once again in print. First published in 1956, it is now in its seventh edition. The fast-moving chronicle is a result of personal interviews of old-timers who are no longer here to tell their tales. Hardcover, illustrated, 291 pages, \$7.00.



**30,000 MILES IN MEXICO** by Nell Murbarger. Joyous adventures of a trip by pick-up camper made by two women from Tijuana to Guatemala. Folksy and entertaining, as well as instructive to others who might make the trip. Hardcover, 309 pages, \$6.00.

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# Insect Safari

**W**HILE entomologists have identified over 600,000 species of insects, some of them believe this represents only about 10 percent of those yet to be classified. We can only speculate on how many of the identified species live on our California deserts, but their numbers and varieties are large enough to make observing and photographing their activities a pleasurable and exciting adventure.

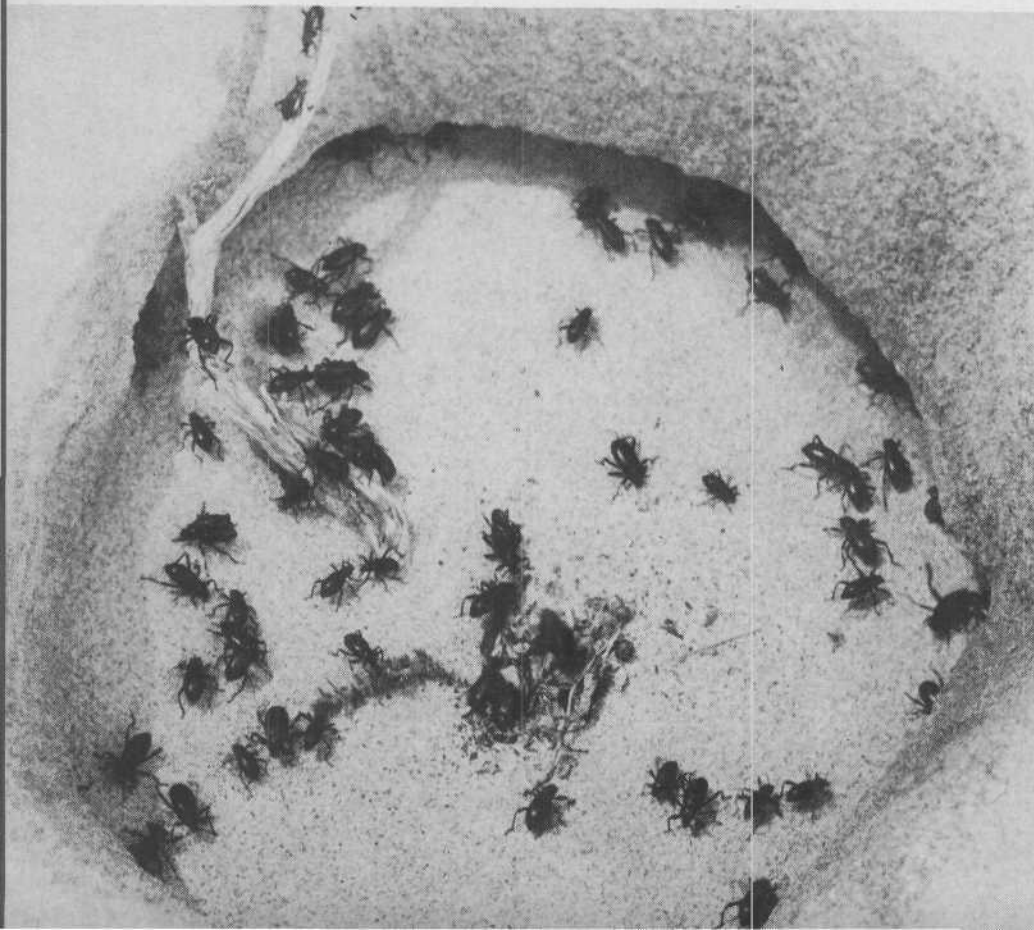
Included in the known species are

around 2500 types of ants, among which are the seed-eating harvesters that find the arid desert lands well suited to their mode of living. The ways they live and work together have astonished laymen and scientists alike. You can see this co-operation during seed collecting time when the harvesters' crater-shaped nests teem with activity. Workers scurry to the seed areas and return in equal haste with their load of seeds which they take underground. Here, another group of ants hull the seeds and store them in

granaries for future use. The seed collectors pick up chaff from the hulled seeds and carry it outside the nest, then proceed to the seed area for another load.

Most entomologists believe insects are motivated solely by instinct, but after observing their reactions to different situations it is easy to conclude that the line separating instinct from reasoning can be extremely fine. I was watching a black harvester ant nest one day when two ants emerged, towing another ant. They dragged their captive several feet away, then returned to the nest. The ejected ant remained motionless for several seconds, as if it were thinking the matter over, then went back to the nest. About a minute later, the drama was repeated with the same victim. A badly bent antenna made its identification possible. As before, it followed its captors back to the nest, but this time the trio remained underground. The reason for the culprit's expulsion and its ultimate fate had to remain a mystery, but from the surface the episode had all the appearance of a human customer getting "bounced" from his favorite liquor emporium.

The death of its queen or the exhaustion of nearby food areas may cause ant



*Pinacate beetles escape from a sand trap in which many of their companions died from starvation. "Cheer leader" appears at top of photo facing first victim rescued.*



by  
**WALTER  
FORD**

*Right: A tarantula hawk trying to force a paralyzed tarantula in a hole too small to receive it.*

*Below:  
"Insect watching" is a fascinating activity for both young and old. Here a youngster studies a black harvester nest in a desert wash.*



colonies to seek new locations. If you happen to discover a colony on moving day, you may see a strange sight of silverfish and small cockroaches moving along with the ants. These intruders live underground with ants and subsist on food stolen from them. There are also many kinds of beetles that occupy ant nests, some of which share their food but in payment exude a sweet substance which the ants eagerly devour. The most unwelcome tenant is a beetle whose larva has such a voracious appetite for young ants that an ant colony can dwindle away if the parent beetle prolongs its visit.

The strangest of all ant enemies is an insect that in its adult stage resembles a dragon fly. It lays its eggs on the ground and when one hatches the ferocious larva that emerges well justifies the name of "ant lion" by which it is known. It has an oval body about one-half inch long that terminates in a head from which powerful jaws extend. In place of a mouth, the jaws contain tubes through which the insect draws the fluids from its victims' bodies. It makes a cone-shape pit in sand, then buries itself at the bottom with only its jaws protruding.

If you are around during feeding time, you may see an example of the ant lion's amazing resourcefulness. When an ant





*Dead digger wasp  
and harvester ants  
linked together—  
the end of a battle  
which both sided lost.*

tumbles into the trap, it is seized immediately and sucked dry of its body liquids. If a wary visitor lingers at the edge of the pit, the ant lion dislodges it with a shower of sand and, within seconds, the surprised victim becomes a casualty. The miniature craters which serve as traps are about one inch and are easily located in the vicinity of ant nests.

There is a desert inhabitant known as a "digger" wasp because it lives underground. Since it usually works alone, entomologists have classified it as a solitary insect, as opposed to the social type. During nest building time, a female digger wasp is particularly mean-tempered and any commotion near her burrow is certain to draw her out in a fighting mood.

When an ant colony needs a new source of food, scouts go out to locate new areas. When they return to the nest, they leave an odor trail for the seed collectors to follow. One morning I came across a column on the way to a new field. Earlier, I noticed a digger wasp making a burrow under a rock about 12 feet from the ant nest and as the seed collectors moved forward it looked like they would clear the wasp's operation by 12 or 14 inches. However, as the column came abreast of it, six or seven ants broke away and charged toward the working wasp. Immediately, as if sensing the danger, the wasp rushed out to meet them. Within a few seconds they were locked in furious combat, but the action slowed down as powerful jaws and

penetrating stingers got in their deadly work. Fifteen minutes later, the combatants had been reduced to a clump of lifeless bodies—a pertinent reminder of the desert denizens' never-ending struggle to survive.

Tarantulas are probably the desert's most maligned inhabitants. Fantastic tales have been told about their springing upon human victims from distances of several feet and inflicting painful bites that caused agonizing lingering death. Since tarantulas are near-sighted, they tend to pounce upon their insect victims from a distance of a few inches, which is most likely the basis for the exaggerated claims about their leaping ability. Actually, the tarantulas of the California deserts are docile creatures and harmless to man unless handled roughly. Desert visitors often let them walk over their bare hands and arms, but naturalists do not approve of the practice. They believe there is less chance of injury to either the viewer or tarantula if it is studied in its natural state on the ground.

During the fall mating season, large numbers of tarantulas may be seen moving across desert roads and open spaces searching for mates. Like most of the other insects, tarantulas live in a feminine world. The male is useful only for perpetuating the species. And, as if to flaunt her independence, the female tarantula usually kills her mate after mating and places him first on the menu for her evening meal.

Tarantulas have many enemies, but the fiercest and most dreaded is a large wasp known as a tarantula hawk, which seems to have a built-in sensor for locating her prey. During the tarantula season, she may be seen cruising around six or eight feet above the ground with her long legs dangling beneath her. When she sights a tarantula, she drops to the ground and attacks it. Although the wasp is outweighed many times, the struggle usually is brief. She stings her victim into submission, then drags it to a prepared burrow, lays her eggs on it, then fills the burrow in.

When the eggs hatch, the larval wasps feed on the paralyzed tarantula. Some tarantulas make their homes in abandoned rodent holes and remain in them during daylight hours to escape the wasp, but that maneuver merely makes her task easier. She overcomes her prey in its underground home, lays her eggs on its body, fills the hole and departs.

One day near the old Borrego spring, I saw a tarantula hawk dragging a tarantula that was almost too large for her to handle. While I looked on she managed to tug her captive along until she tried to stuff it in a hole in the ground that was too small. She worked about a half hour turning the tarantula sideways and on its back, and tucking its legs under it, but made little progress. Finally, she gave up and pulled it under a low-lying shrub nearby. Ordinarily, tarantula hawks move around so quickly that I have never been able to photograph one, but this time she was so engrossed in her work that I was able to get within a few inches of the action.

Of the many insects thriving on the desert, pinacate beetles appear to be the least physically suited to their surroundings. Nature encased their bodies in heat-absorbing black shells, then settled them in areas where summer temperatures reach unbelievable heights. Yet, in spite of those handicaps, they have survived! In a section of Mexico, their number has increased to the extent that the whole area is known as the Pinacate country. This is the vast expanse of extinct volcanoes and sand dunes which lie



approximately 40 miles north of Puerto Penasco, on the Gulf of Lower California.

Pinacate beetles are friendly insects. If you stop for lunch along a desert trail, you are likely to be visited soon after by one or more arriving to share your food. When danger threatens, the beetle feigns death by standing on its head. When attempting to attain that position it frequently falls completely over, which has gained it the additional name of "tumble bug." The beetle is a poor climber but equipped with a curiosity that occasionally lures it into locations from which it can't escape.

While exploring the Kelso sand dunes one day, I discovered about 60 pinacate beetles trying to climb out of a hole in the sand. A lone beetle was running excitedly around the edge as if shouting encouragement to its friends below. I placed a branch of a dead shrub in the pit and within a few minutes all of its living prisoners had climbed to safety. There were a few dead beetles remaining in the hole and since pinacate beetles are considered to be vegetarians, I was curious to learn if they would become cannibals when starving. However, the dead bee-

tles showed no signs of dismemberment, so the reputation of the beetle clan remained unsullied.

An interesting byplay to the drama began when the survivors started to leave the pit. The beetle that remained on top mounted the rescue ladder facing the oncoming evacuees and remained there until the last one passed, then turned and followed it away from the scene.

I have reported only a few of the dramas which occur daily in insect land, but with millions of actors available, a sharp eye may detect some thrilling action as yet unrecorded. Or you may chance upon those rare species of ants that make audible sounds. Yes, they do exist, according to a Los Angeles County Museum entomologist in an interview with a *Los Angeles Times* reporter. The scientist found one species of ants that make clicking noises with their jaws, and another that emit squeaking sounds when they rub their stomachs together. The discovery was made near the Old Woman Mountains in the eastern end of San Bernardino County.

While most modern cameras are equipped with a lens that will allow you

to focus 24 or 30 inches from your subject, I believe that for insect photography the low-priced supplementary lens which fit over your present camera lens produce more satisfactory results. They provide a larger image on the film, which in turn will make a larger and sharper enlargement. The lenses come in three degrees of magnification, the strongest of which will permit focusing within a few inches of your subject.

Check your film supply, make sure you have the light meter and you're ready for a "Safari into Insect-Land!" □

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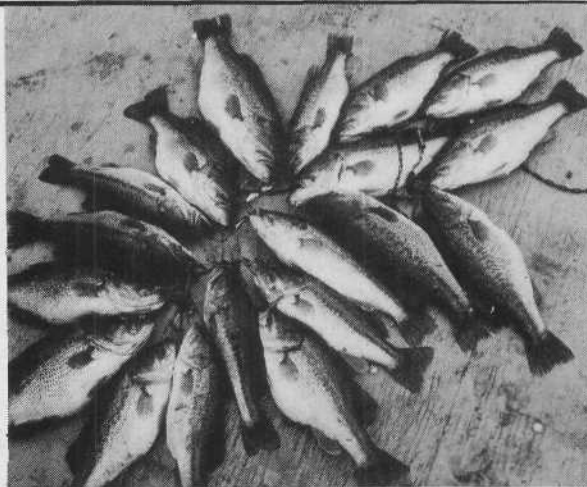
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# A Float Trip Down Desolation Canyon

by F. A. BARNES

**D**ESOLATION CANYON—could a float trip on the Green River through this deep rivergorge in eastern Utah be anything but a grim and forbidding experience? Certainly the name of the canyon has an ominous ring, and Gray Canyon, the gorge just below Desolation through which floaters must also pass, hardly sounds any better.

Yet, a more enchanting and beautiful five-day wilderness river trip could hardly be imagined.

The tremendous gorges of the Green and Colorado Rivers were the last in this country to be explored. On May 24th, in 1869, Major John Wesley Powell, with nine men in wooden boats, set out from the town of Green River, in what was then Wyoming Territory, to explore the uncharted waters of the Green and Colorado Rivers. On August 29, after three months of adventures and harrowing experiences, Major Powell's expedition finally reached the junction of the Colorado and Virgin Rivers, in southern Nevada.

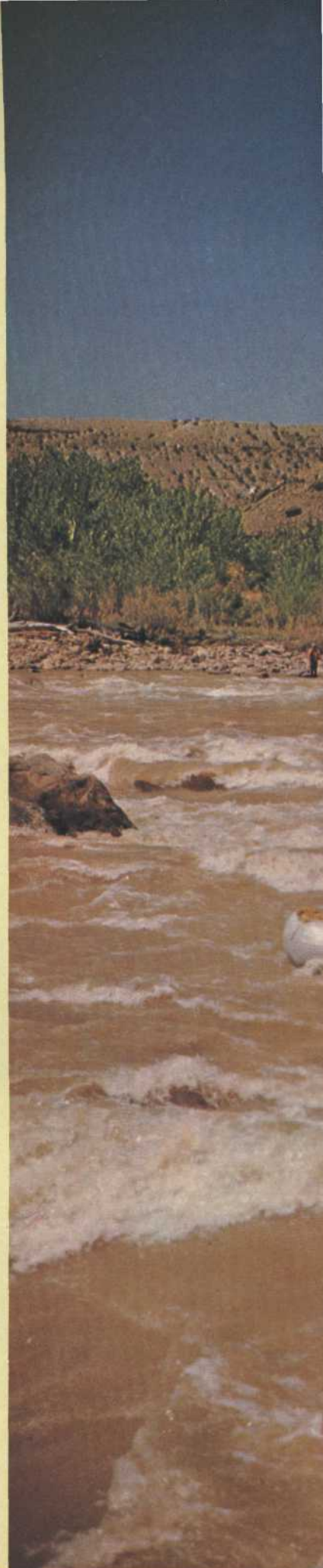
This historic trip closed a major gap in human knowledge of these two long river systems. The lower Colorado had been explored by Captain George A. Johnson aboard the commercial paddlewheeler

steamer "General Jessup" up to Callville, Nevada, in 1854. In 1858, a specially-built government exploration paddlewheeler succeeded in going the additional 10 miles from Callville to the mouth of the Virgin River.

Now, the lower Colorado is a staircase series of man-made reservoirs, and Flaming Gorge Dam has backed Green River waters almost to Green River, Wyoming, where Major Powell's explorations began.

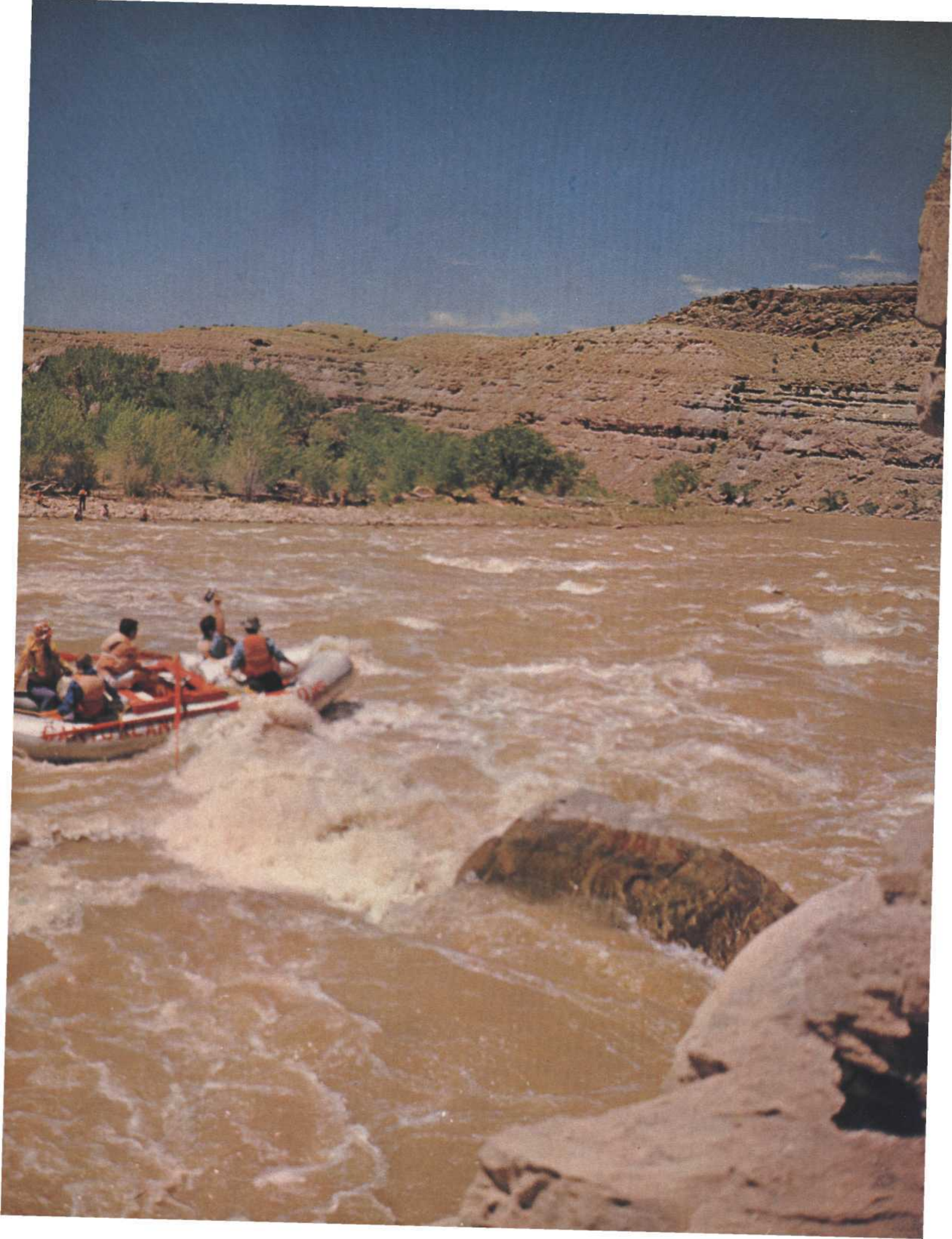
But there are still stretches of this famous route that are as primitive and untamed as they ever were. The best know, of course, is between Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Mead, where the Colorado River plunges through the Grand Canyon. A less well-known stretch is that between Flaming Gorge Dam and the upper end of Lake Powell. Along this part of Powell's adventurous trip, the Green River wanders through the picturesque canyons of Dinosaur National Monument in the upper corners of Utah and Colorado, crosses the broad, open valley near Vernal, Utah, then soon enters the tortuous twistings of Desolation and Gray Canyons.

The Green then meanders through another open area near Green River, Utah,

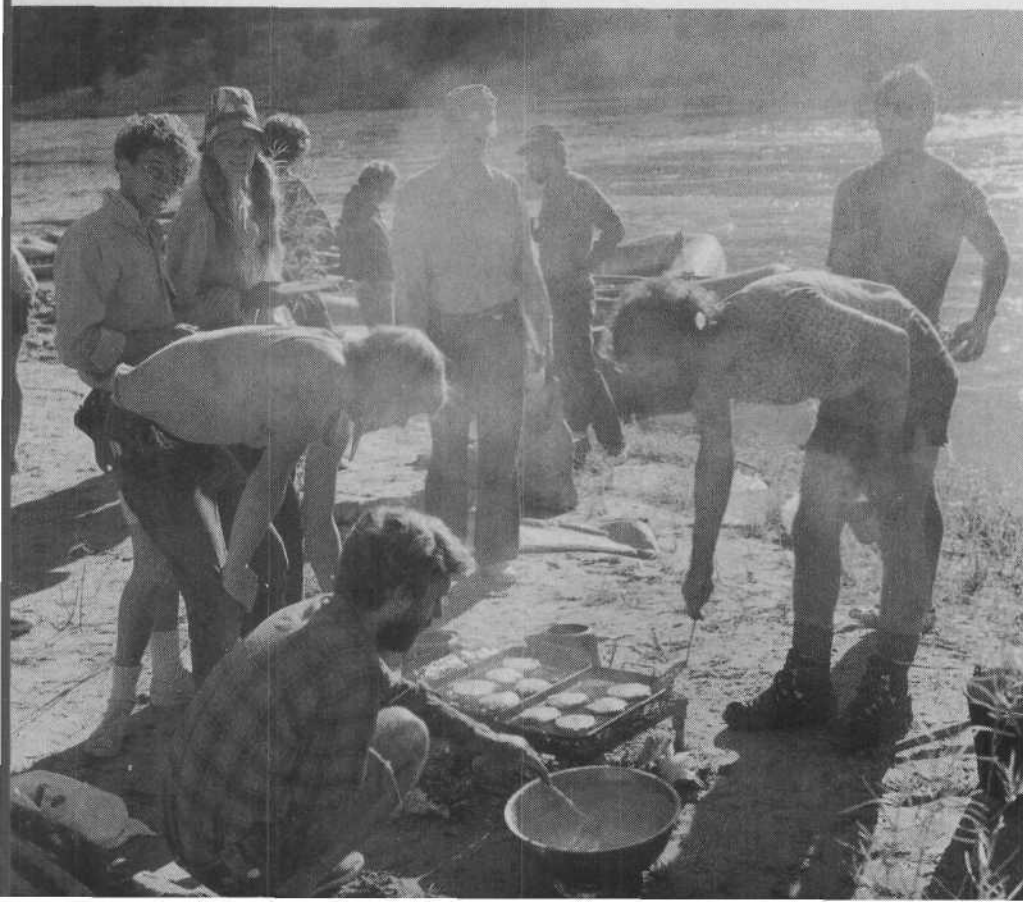


*Desert/May 1974*









before knifing into still other magnificent canyons where it joins the Colorado River in the heart of Canyonlands National Park. In the lower part of this park, the Colorado tumbles down Cataract Canyon before joining the placid waters of Lake Powell.

Most of these still-untamed stretches of Major Powell's famous journey are now run by commercial float-trip operators. The Grand Canyon is the most popular, with Cataract Canyon next. Not so many make the run through Desolation and Gray Canyons, and still fewer float the Green between Flaming Gorge and Vernal, chiefly because the upper Green River is less well-known to those who seek to follow Powell's route, or who simply enjoy the quiet beauty and adventure of a float trip through primitive canyon country.

A float trip on the Green River through Desolation and Gray Canyons can begin at Ouray, Utah, some 30 miles to the south and west of Vernal, Utah, or it can begin at others places such as Sand Wash, where a wagon ferry once crossed the river. Sand Wash is 32 river-miles below Ouray and marks the actual beginning of Desolation Canyon.

Although some float trips still set out from Ouray, there are several million overwhelming reasons for starting farther downriver—mosquitos! At Ouray, large cottonwood trees offer welcome shade in the warmer months, but dense riverbank vegetation provides a luxuriant habitat for hordes of these ever-hungry insects. An excerpt from the journal of George Y. Bradley, one of the men in Powell's 1869 expedition, describes this problem most graphically:

"The mosquitos are perfectly frightful. As I went through the rank grass and sunflower—they would fairly scream at me. I think I never saw them thicker even in Florida than at this place . . ."

These annoying insects are in evidence only the first day or so of canyon float trips, however, and then only ashore.

*It takes time to set up camp  
each night, and time to clean up  
the next morning,  
but good outfitters always leave  
a campsite clean.  
Nothing beats cookout food  
and the smell of an  
open campfire.*



Canyonlands Expeditions, operating out of Kanab, Utah, has pioneered commercial float trips through Desolation and Gray Canyons, as well as other trips on the Green and Colorado Rivers. A trip through Desolation with this outfitter begins at Sand Wash, where well-equipped 20-foot rubber rafts await the arrival of those who are making the run.

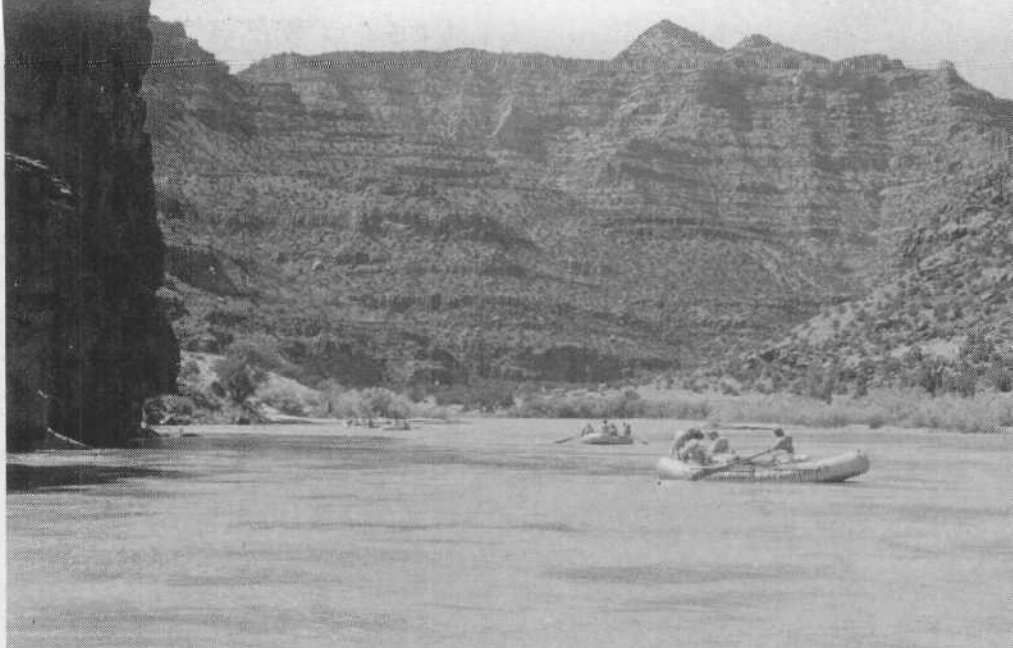
Each raft is manned by an experienced riverguide and contains food storage chests, water cans, sleeping bags, oars for guiding the raft and a life preserver for each person in the boat. Dufflebags for personal gear are also provided, and everything in the raft is waterproof and securely tied down while under way. The rapids encountered on this trip are not dangerous to modern rubber rafts, but a good riverguide still prepares for upsets, remembering that Major Powell's expedition lost considerable food and other supplies and equipment this way.

It is advisable that float trip passengers prepare themselves for a wetting, because waterfight highjinks are a regular part of the fun on such trips, especially during the warmer months. To prevent costly accidents, photographers are furnished waterproof cases for their camera gear, but when cameras are in use while afloat, it pays to be wary of a waterbucket attack from another raft, or of water thrown into or clear over the raft while running rapids.

Float trips on the Green are offered spring, summer and fall. Each season has its advantages and drawbacks. In the spring, the water is highest and the rapids most challenging, but the chances of rain, wind and cool weather are greatest. Summer trips are calmer and also beautiful, but heat can be a problem for some. Fall is easily the most colorful time, with riverbank trees turning red and gold. The warm days and cool nights then make pleasant traveling, but low water exposes rocks and requires extra caution to avoid upset or damage to the huge rubber rafts.

Oar-guided float trips through Desolation and Gray Canyons generally take four or five days, although larger pontoon craft powered with outboard motors can easily make the trip in three. Traveling so fast in such large boats, however, somewhat detracts from the leisurely wilderness adventure spirit and does not allow time for exploring sidecanyons and

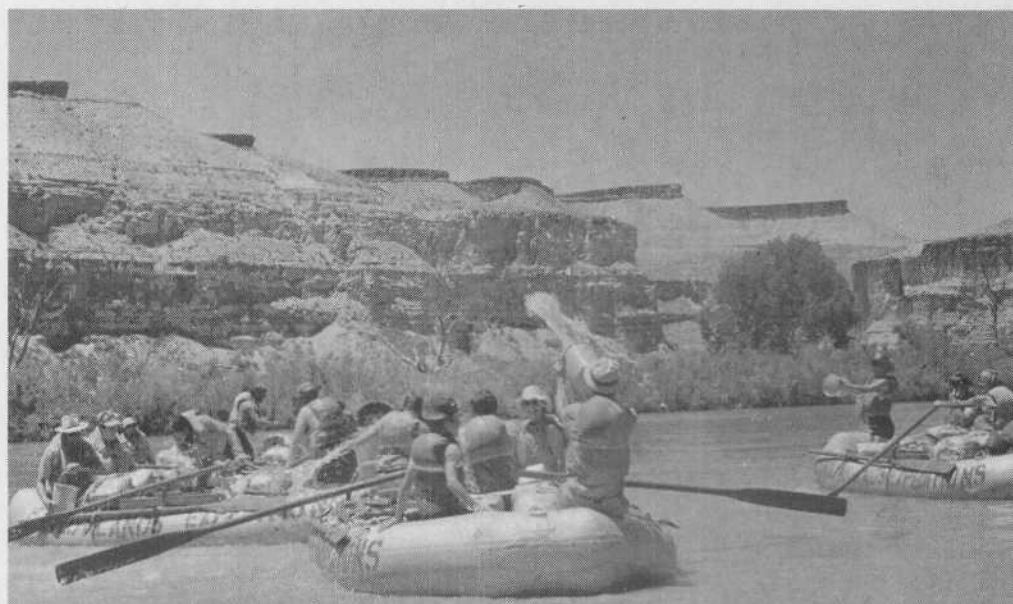
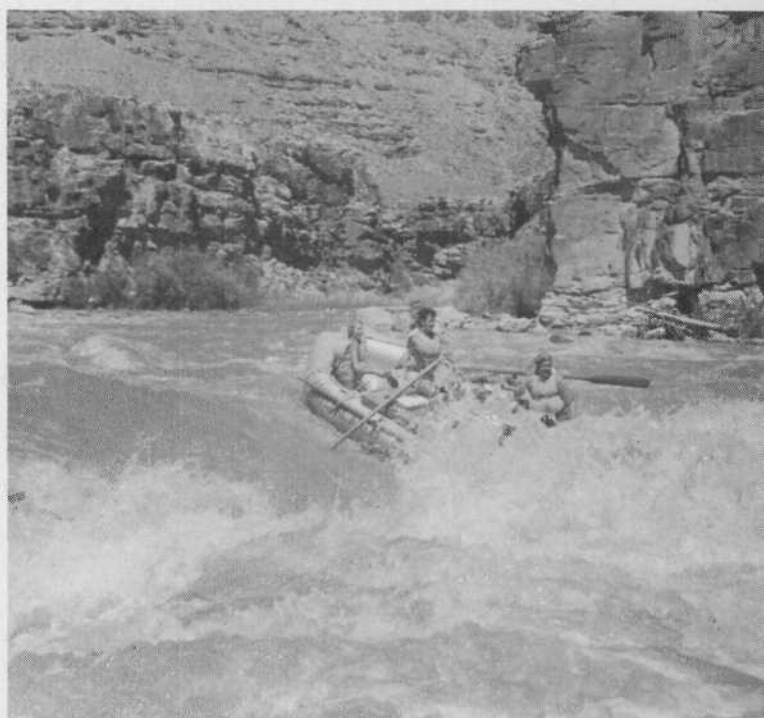
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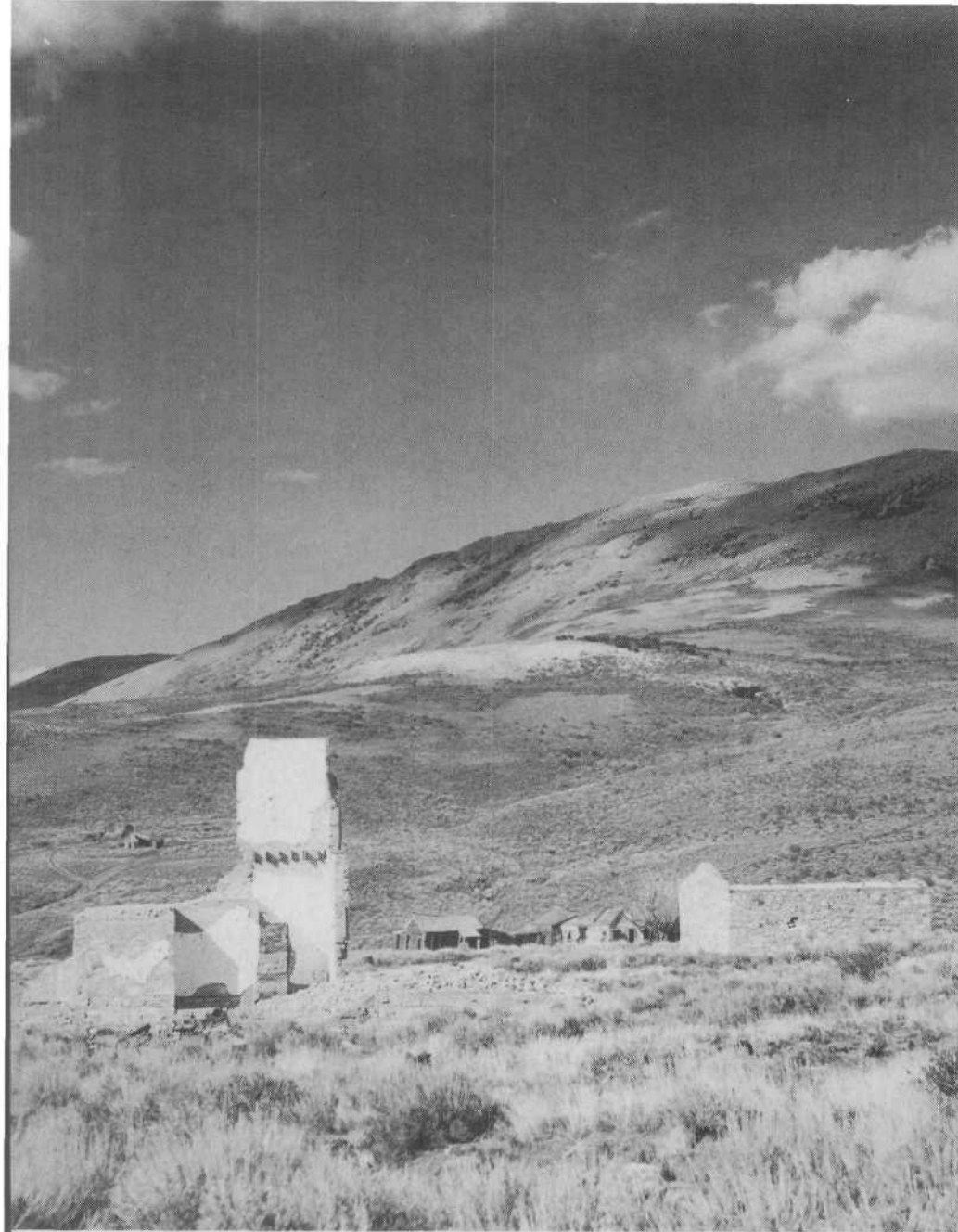


*Above: In calm stretches of the river, groups of floaters spread out.*

*Right: Here we go! This one's going to be a good one!*

*Below: On warm days, numerous water fights between boats help pass time.*





*The majestic Withington Hotel of dressed sandstone and Oregon pine was the most elaborate and costly structure of its kind in Nevada when it was built in 1869. Its four walls and six arches were still standing as late as 1956. Standing four square for 87 years, in 17 years those walls have been reduced to this. One can see the marks on the wall from vandals. Why?*

*Below: A quiet residential street in Hamilton.*



# OVERNIGHT IN A GHOST TOWN

by THOMAS W. MOORE



*How doth the city sit solitary, that  
was full of people! how is she become  
as a widow! She that was great among  
nations, and princess among the  
provinces, how is she become tributary!*

*She weepeth sore in the night,  
and her tears are on her cheeks:  
among all her lovers she hath none to  
comfort her; all her friends have dealt  
treacherously with her, they are become  
her enemies.*

Lamentations 1:1,2

THE SPRING day was cool and clear and full of promise as we traversed the steadily climbing, twisting, winding road. There is nothing longer than a ghost town access trail. Is it around the next bend? The next? The patches of old, drifted, melting snow we drove through, along with the spectacular view, made us feel we were crossing the top of the world—alone. Traces of mining activity began to appear now and, farther still, mine tailings pock-marked the mountain slope. Our anticipation quickened as we passed an old building foundation



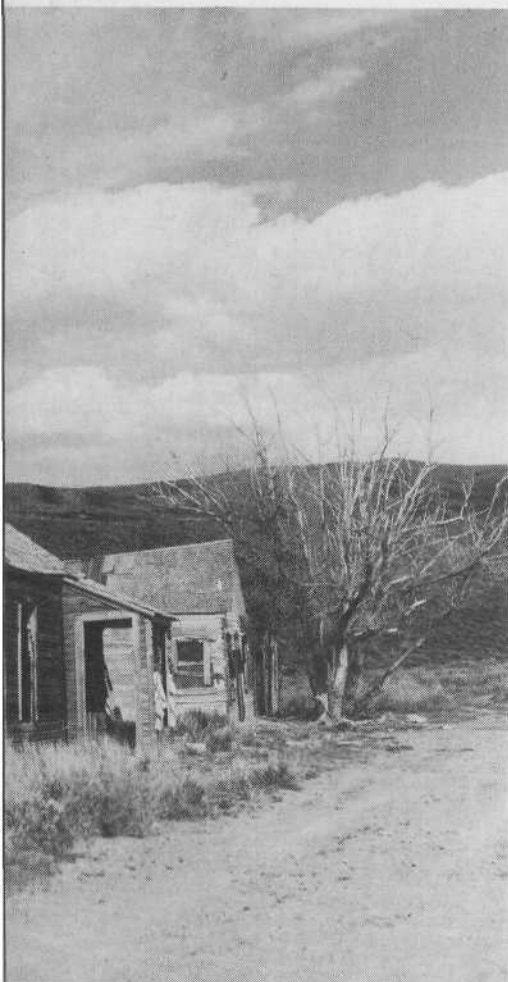
*Portal to abandonment. I don't believe these bare boards ever felt a coat of paint.*

slumped beside the road.

Suddenly, there it was, spread out in the distance before us like a few old brown tea leaves stuck against the green, cup-like side of the mountain. Hamilton—once the silver queen city of Nevada and all the West—now a conglomerate of splayed wooden buildings, crumbling walls and foundations flung against the mountain. It was a beautiful setting; so silent, with big fleecy clouds overhead casting moving shadows upon the land and the chill breeze plucking at the new born flowers. It was sad, too, knowing of the great heart-beat of life that once pulsed here and now I sensed no pulse whatsoever. The queen is dead and there is no king.

Hamilton was the first, the most re-

spectable, the most metropolitan of 11 sister cities of the 9000-foot high White Pine mining district. She was conceived by a lump of silver ore in payment for a stolen pot of beans by a hungry Shoshone Indian on January 4, 1868. She gestated as Cave City and was born as Hamilton in May, 1868—named for W. H. Hamilton, a promoter of the town. Her first frame building was a saloon completed a month later. Overnight, Hamilton grew from a few caves, tents and a single business house to an exciting and extravagant city with a mile-long main street lined with business buildings and cross streets which carried the town to a mile and a half in width. By 1869, Hamilton claimed a population of 15,000 people and was the second largest city in





*Little Ken Paul, so typical of the children's lot, lived only 15 months during the twilight period of the town.*

Nevada. It was also the second highest city in the state, topped only by Treasure City, one of its sister cities three miles to the south.

Think of it! In less than one year, Hamilton restaurants could serve a meal equal to Delmonico's of New York. The town, or rather city, had a school district, an elected board of trustees, erected a \$55,000 courthouse, built St. Luke's Episcopal Church and constructed the J. P. Withington Hotel, the most elaborate structure of its kind in Nevada.

The daily *Inland Empire*, newspaper of the city, had become one of the outstanding publications of Nevada. This was no small feat considering such contemporaries as the *Territorial Enterprise* and the *Reese River Reveille*. Business lots were selling for as much as \$5,000 to \$6,000 each!

Nature, being the perverse female she is, played a dirty trick on Hamilton. The fabulous silver was only in surface ore and with the demonetizing of silver in 1873, the town began to die. The resulting shriveling of business receipts caused one Alexander Cohn to set fire to his cigar store in order to collect the insurance. The fire he started burned up his store and one third of the city, and Hamilton's glory went up with it. A year later, her sister cities likewise burned

and in 1885, when her splendid courthouse went up in flames, Hamilton was doomed. In 15 years, she and her sister cities of the lofty White Pine district had produced over \$35,000,000 in ore—a fantastic output in one short pulse beat of Nevada history.

Parking on the shade side of one of the disarranged houses, we gathered our photographic equipment and proceeded to explore the town. It was quiet except for the wind and an occasional voice carried on it for we were not alone here. It was strange that as we walked and talked a hush came over us. Our strident voices quieted until we were speaking to each other in whispers. Why? It was as if we were intruding on sacred ground and we could feel a strange and compelling sense of presence. There was a natural reluctance to enter the buildings that had once been homes, but one beckoned with door flung wide, hanging still on one hinge. Its broken windows like sightless sockets brooded over our intrusion. The room was dark and a litter of old newspapers, wallpaper, tin cans, broken furniture and old shoes covered the floor.

Standing in the center of the room, I looked out of each window in turn. To the west, falling away from me, was the steep mountain valley, in creeping shad-

ow now with backlighted mountain ranges beyond. To the north and east, neighboring relics of houses clung against the sloping mountainside, and to the south, the majestic ruin of the old Withington Hotel dominated the rest of the town with the green mountain topped with snow showing starkly beyond.

My wife had discretely slipped away to explore other buildings and indulge her own reveries. Here, where I stood, life had once pulsed and died. What kind of life. Was it peaceful family life? Was it turmoil? Was this a happy home? Was it a lonely, work-a-day existence? These homes were not the one room miner's shacks typical of so many transitory mining towns. There had been some substantiality here. Hamilton had once been a very proud city.

I walked to the next house, the next building, photographing as I went, but always lingering a moment in each to get the "feel" of the building, to experience that ethereal sense of presence you only notice if you walk these ruins alone.

This was Saturday night. A hundred years ago, the day shift would just be straggling into town from the mines — their work finished for the week. It was a six-day, back-breaking work week in those days at four to six dollars a day. Now for most, the married wanted their suppers, and the single headed for their favorite saloon and companionship. Thus, the night's revelry would begin.

It was indeed appropriate that an old silver town would have a silver moon. In the clear, cold night air of White Pine Mountain, that moon dressed the ruins in a silver mantle. Time to bed down — with sleeping bags, air mattresses and pillows in the covered truck bed, we were as comfortable as any guest at the Withington Hotel!

The new day was cold and clear. The silver sheen covering the buildings was not of the moon from the night before, but from the frost of the early morning. After breakfast, we set forth on a brisk half-mile walk to the old cemetery.

The tipsy headstones told the story. It was the children who paid the biggest price. The climate was too cold and rigorous, the diet too unbalanced and the doctors too few. The wooden headboards had weathered beyond reading, but we read the stone markers, making a game of searching for the oldest grave. Of



*course, many of the stones were not near the graves they were supposed to mark. Many were broken, chipped and defaced—even the dead were not allowed to rest in the peace they deserved.*

Hours later, we were again walking the streets of the town and exploring the buildings. We often remarked about the smallness of the rooms, the narrowness of halls and doorways and now realized that Americans of 100 years ago were much smaller in stature, but certainly not in courage or spirit.

I stood, once again alone, in the midst of the ruin that was the Withington Hotel. This had been Nevada's finest? It was smaller in area than a standard size basketball court, yet it was most accommodating in its glory days.

Our departure was a reluctant one—like leaving old friends, knowing you will not see them alive again. Once again, Hamilton had given her all and taken nothing. She had abundantly provided us the "stuff" to fire our imaginations and certainly the most wonderful night's sleep—with that sense of well-being that comes when mind and body are equally rested—when we stayed overnight in a ghost town!



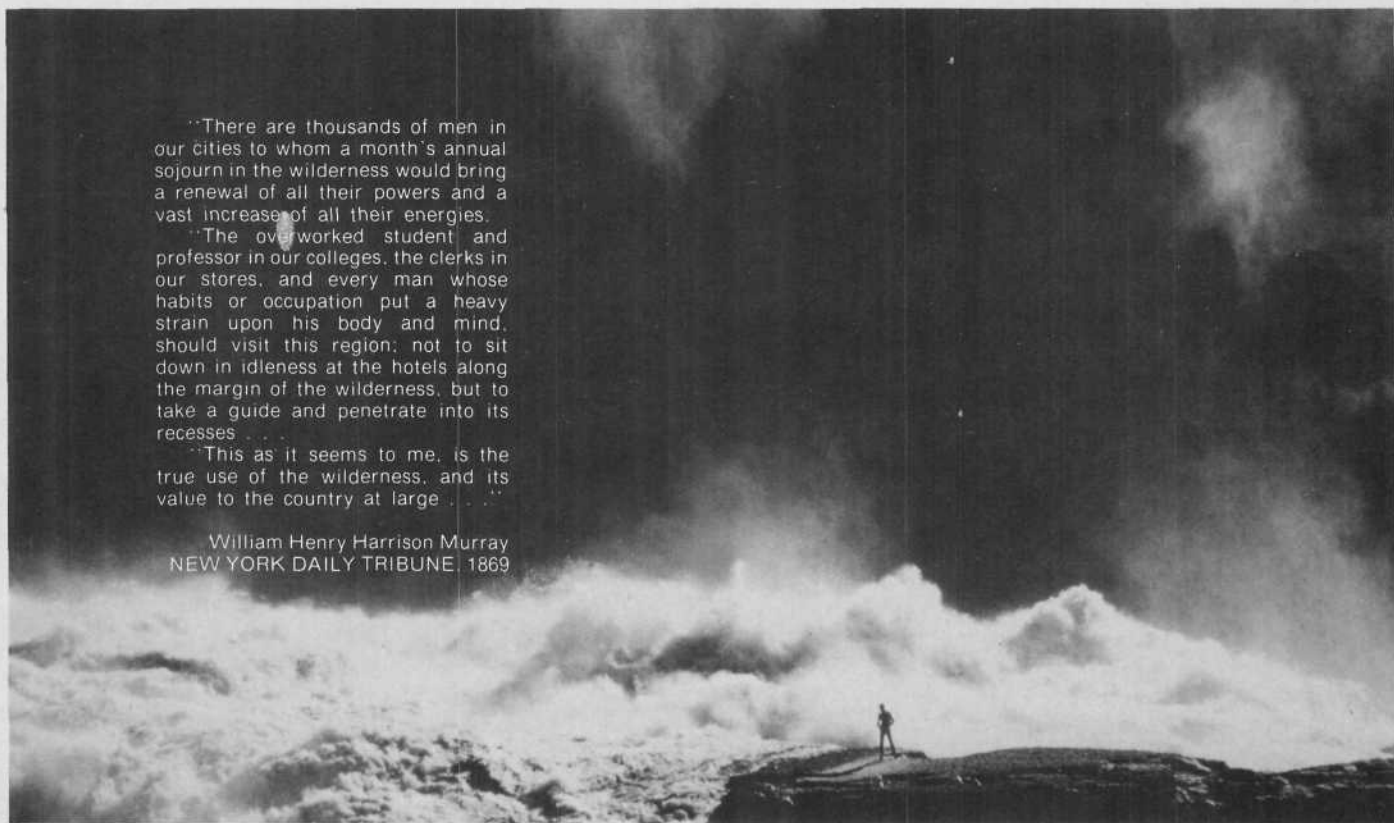
*Goodbye old friend! Goodbye Hamilton—and one means that literally.*

"There are thousands of men in our cities to whom a month's annual sojourn in the wilderness would bring a renewal of all their powers and a vast increase of all their energies.

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"This as it seems to me, is the true use of the wilderness, and its value to the country at large . . ."

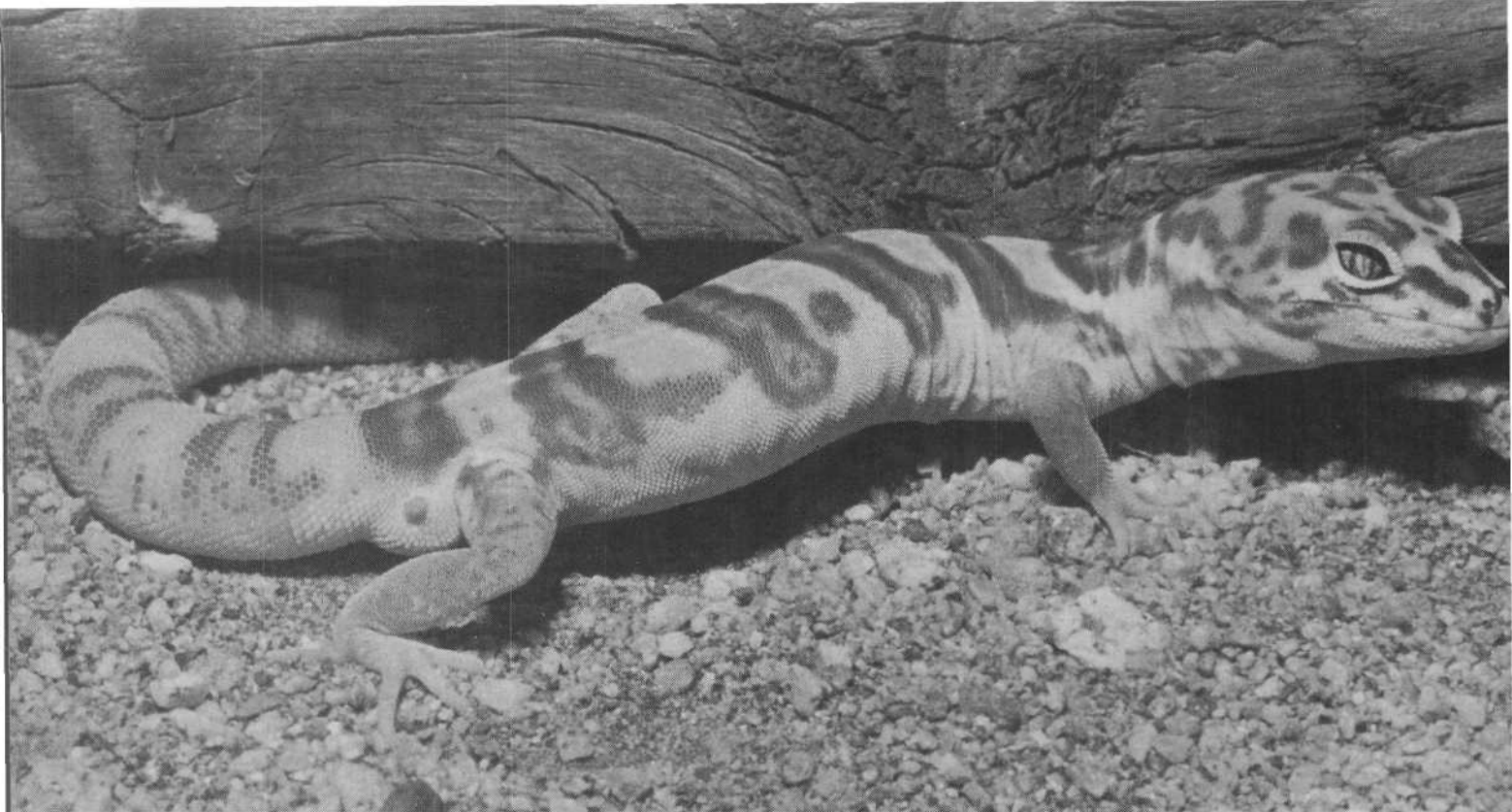
William Henry Harrison Murray  
NEW YORK DAILY TRIBUNE, 1869



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## Desert Life

by Hans Baerwald

*Flash caught this banded gecko on his nightly search for insects. Although common in the desert, and especially the foothills, he is nocturnal and rarely seen.*



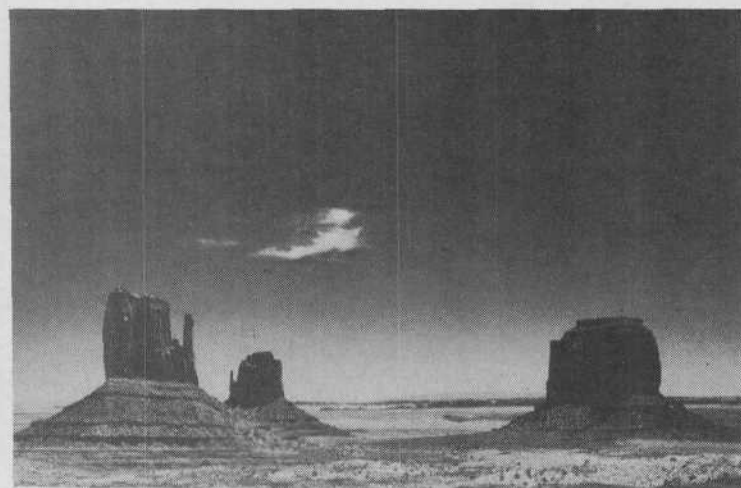
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# Utah's Fire Opal

by EARL SPENDLOVE

"**I** CALL THIS FIRE OPAL," A. L. (Mac) McDonald said, as he held up a sparkling clear stone and rotated it slowly in the bright afternoon sunlight.

The stone, from the opal beds in central Utah, was not the blood-red Mexican fire opal I had seen at rock and gem shows, but it suddenly came alive as red, green and orange flashes of light radiated from the waxy surface.

"We found some more real beauties," Beverly Hendricks said, as she pulled a handful of shining, crystal-clear specimens out of a small canvas bag and held them in the sunlight, where they shone like diamonds. She and her husband, Roy, weekend rockhounds from Santa Rosa, California, had made a special trip to Utah to spend a half a day picking the little beauties out of the ground.

My wife, daughter and I discovered the opal beds when returning from a vacation in Arizona. Five miles north of Milford, Utah, on State Highway 257, a sign read, "Fire Opal," and pointed to the east. We had an extra day, so I turned the camper off the asphalt onto a well-graded, gravel road and headed east toward the rugged Mineral Mountains. After six miles, we turned right, followed a side road a half mile to the south and stopped in front of a large, white bus, set on a foundation.

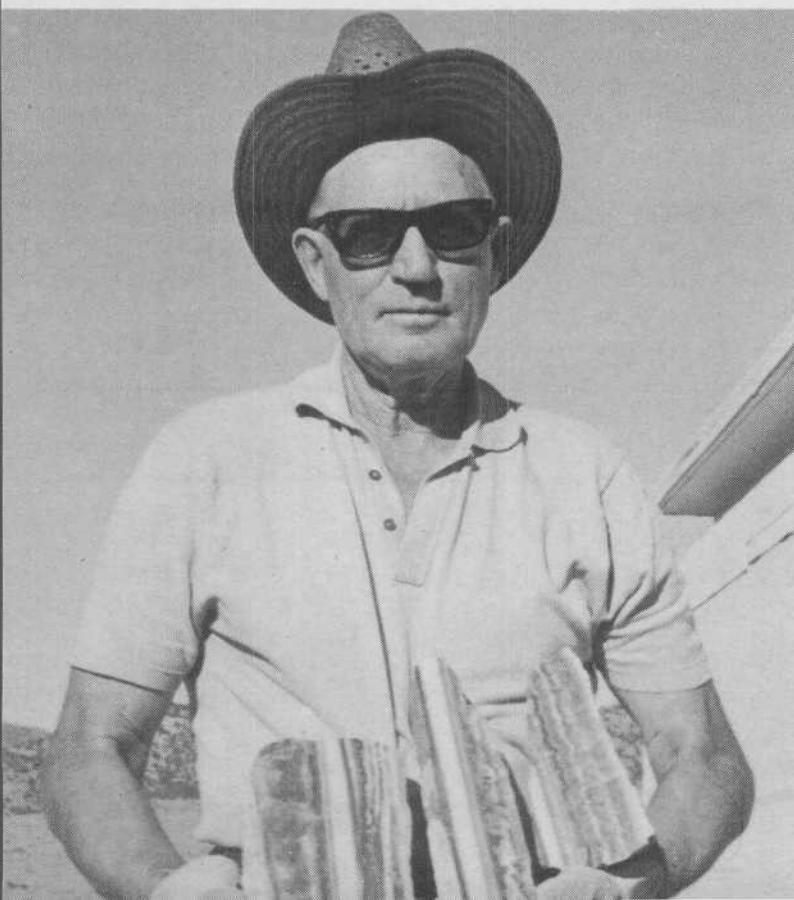
We were wondering what to do when McDonald, a tall man with a friendly grin, came out and introduced himself. Moments later, he had ushered us into the nicely furnished bus and made us acquainted with his wife, Kate.

While explaining his operation, he showed us a number of objects made from the local stone. A polished table top was set in marble-like, honey-colored, yellow stone. Highly polished cabochons, and settings for rings, bolo ties and belt buckles, made from clear and striped specimens, sparkled like jewels from a pirate treasure chest. These items were not for sale. The only way to get them, McDonald explained, was to collect the stone and make them yourself, or have someone else make them for you.

McDonald, a retired railroad engineer, leases 240 acres that covers the opal beds from the the state of Utah. He does not sell sawed or polished opal, nor does he fill mail orders. Each spring, however, he uncovers opal-bearing strata in several places, so a good variety is readily available to rockhounds. There is a ten dollar charge to enter the quarries, but you can spend the day if you like, and collect 10 pounds of opal. Anything above this amount will cost you a dollar a pound.

Only hand tools are allowed in the quarries, and all collectors must sign an agreement to obey a common-sense set of rules and regulations required by the state of Utah. The beds are opened when the weather begins to warm up in the spring. About October 1, when the cold winds begin to blow across the desert, McDonald brings in a bulldozer, covers the exposed strata, and moves to Milford for the winter.

After the Hendricks' had paid for their opal and headed back to California, we walked 100 yards to the south where the



A. L. [Mac] McDonald holds opal striped with red, white and purple that looks like rich, lean bacon.



soil and surface rocks had been pushed back, exposing a strata of layered rock of many colors. Opal fragments, shining like broken glass in the afternoon sun, lay everywhere. Mac explained that all opal did not produce the spectral play of colors we had seen in the rocks the Hendricks' had collected, and that most of what we were looking at had been discarded by gem hunters.

"Look at this pretty rock!" my wife shouted, and held up a coconut-sized hunk of opal that contained all the colors of the rainbow.

"That's nothing but a piece of junk," McDonald explained and he showed us that it was full of holes, bubbles and cracks that made it unfit for polishing.

There's no explaining a woman, and when he threw it down my wife pounced on the rock like a hungry coyote on a sick rabbit. And, junk or not, that "pretty rock," with a piece of felt glued to the bottom, sits in the center of an antique oak table in our living room.

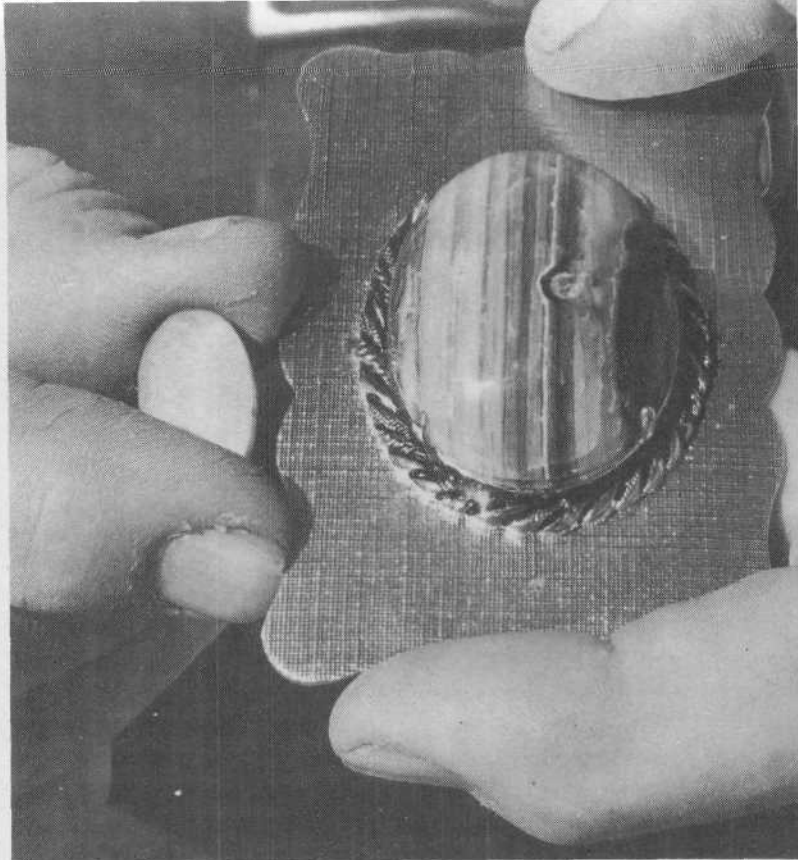
The Utah opal, like that in many places, was formed on terraces surrounding hot springs, similar to those in Yellowstone National Park. Upon cooling, the silica precipitated out of the hot, acid water, and was deposited on the surface and in cavities in extremely thin films. Reflected light from the inner layers, called opalescence, gives gem-quality opal a soft, multi-colored glow, like that seen on a soap bubble, or a drop of oil shimmering in the sunlight on the surface of a pool of water.

Stones which have this play of colors are considered gem-quality, and are much in demand by rockhounds everywhere. The color stones which display these mysterious flashes of light can vary from water-clear highlight, to highly prized, deep, rich black, depending upon the impurity carried in the silica gel.

"We'd just as well stop looking," McDonald said, when the sun sank so low in the west that the opal fragments lost their vitreous sheen, then added, "why don't you camp here tonight and come back about 10 in the morning?"

There are no camping facilities available at the opal beds, so we pulled our camper into a grove of juniper on the side of a ridge and made ready for the night. The elevation is slightly above 5000 feet and the nights are cool, so I gathered a pile of dry sagebrush and jun-

*Precious or fire opal, left, emits flashes of red, green and orange light. Common opal, banded red-brown-white is shown in belt buckle. Both specimens came from the Utah opal dig.*



iper and dug a pit for a fire. After we had eaten, we built a fire and sat and watched as the hungry flames quickly devoured the dry wood.

Next morning, just as the sun showed over the mountains to the east, my daughter and I walked along the ridge above our camp. In one place, we found many obsidian fragments scattered over a small knoll. We could find no ledge or outcropping, and wondered where they came from. Finally, after finding a few pottery sherds and a glassy, black arrowhead half hidden in the dirt, we concluded that Indians had camped here and chipped tools and projectile points out of the shiny, black obsidian they carried with them.

When we went back to the opal pit we found Lou and Ethelyn Braun of Salt Lake City, working on the outcropping. With a pick, Braun broke several large chunks out of the bedrock, then he and his wife examined each one closely. Then, with a small pick-ax, they broke out clear and milky-white specimens that sent out soft, ghost-like flashes of light from their waxy surfaces. "Pretty rocks," like the one that caught my wife's eye, were tossed aside.

"There's plenty of opal here, so I don't object if they want to high-grade," McDonald said, as we watched the Brauns, who had been joined in the pit by Bob and Lillian Breck of Sylmar, Cali-

fornia, pound gemstones out of the hard, glassy rock.

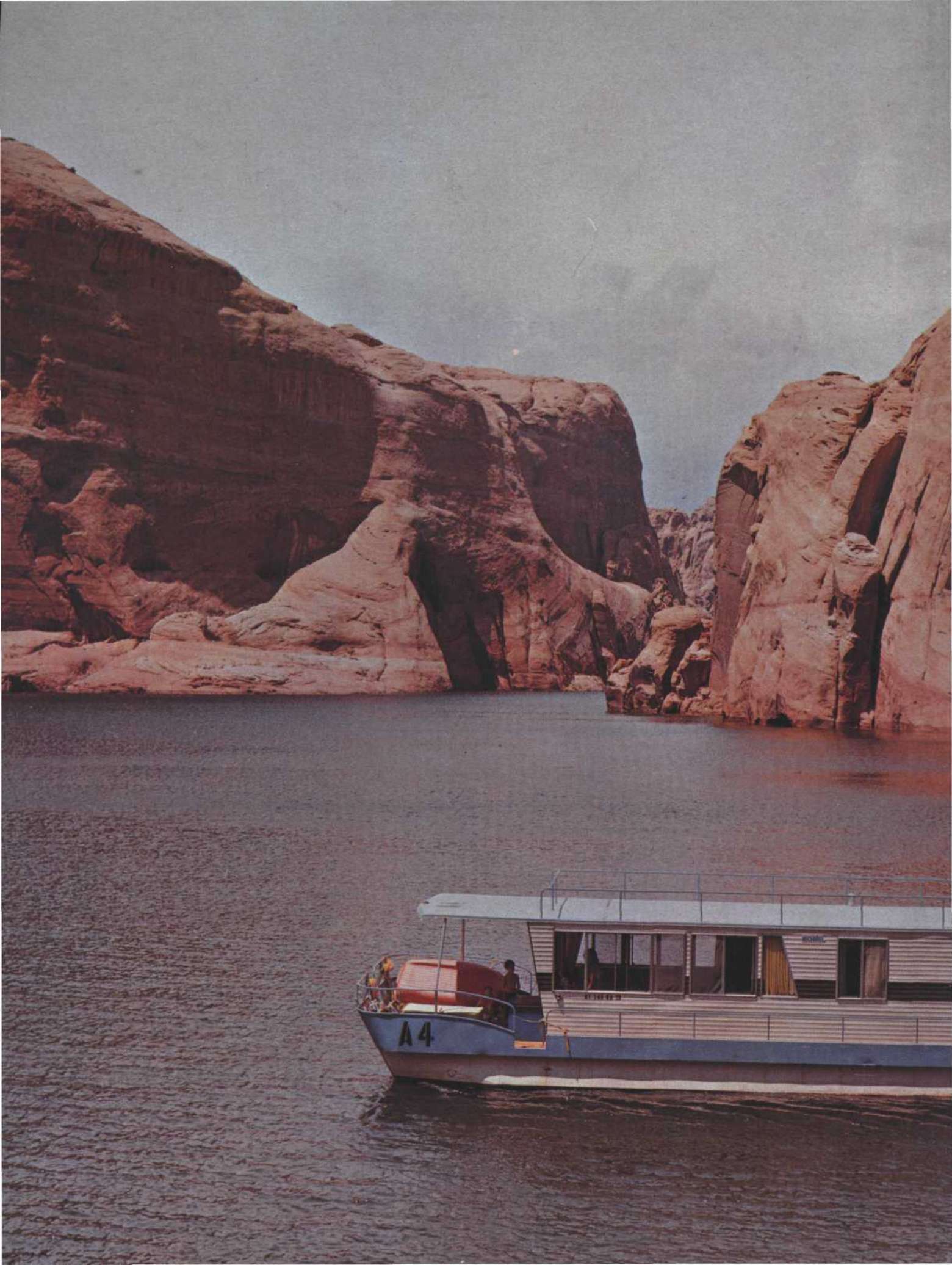
Ghost-like flashes of light emitted by fine, gem-quality opal, and never fully explained by science, has made the stone a source of mystery. In Roman and pre-Roman times, it was considered a charm against the "evil eye," and was thought to bring good luck to the wearer. It was highly prized by the early Romans, and considerable effort and expense were expended in bringing it from mines in Hungary.

As time went on, it fell from favor and somehow became the patron jewel of thieves. During the nineteenth century, it came to be considered an unlucky stone, and was believed to foretell death or disaster by unexpected, brilliant flashes of light, or by suddenly becoming dead and colorless as a piece of dried mud.

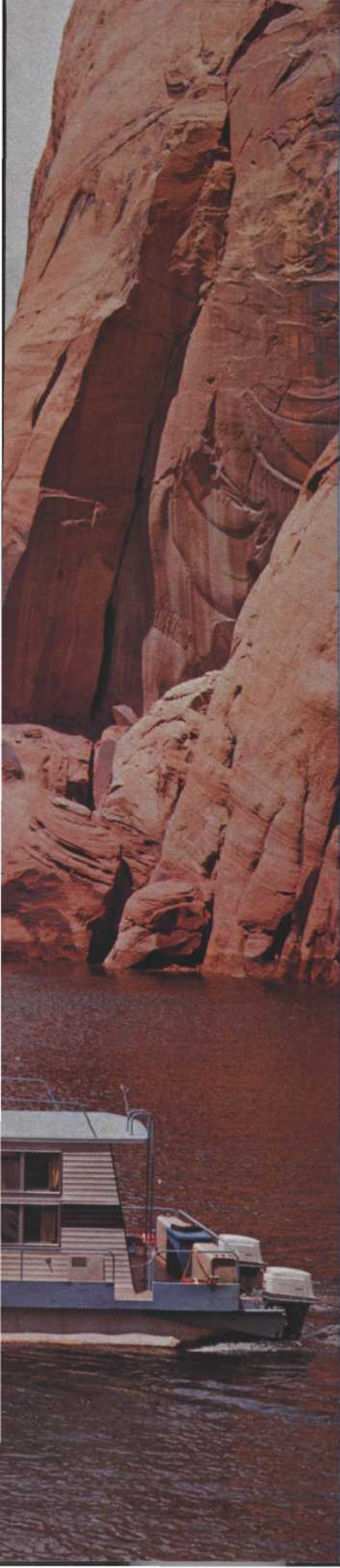
Today, the old superstitions are gone. Collectors from all states of the Union and several foreign countries have visited the Utah opal site. Many have been there several times, and some carry away several hundred pounds of the glittering rock.

"I wish I was unlucky enough to have a whole sack full of opal like this," Lou Braun replied when asked if he considered the stone unlucky, and he held a sparkling specimen up to the sunlight. □









# Happiness is... a Houseboat on Lake Powell

by ERNIE COWAN

I HAD A twinge of conscience as we made camp that first night, deep within a secret little high-walled cove on Lake Powell's Escalante River Arm.

Here we were in a ruggedly beautiful land that less than 100 years ago was known to only a few hardy explorers and pioneers. They had camped here, too, but their journey to this spot was torturous. Their camp gear did not include refrigerator, gas stove and all the comforts of home, as ours did.

It was their exploration and sacrifice that opened this fascinating area of southern Utah for modern travelers. The early pioneers had struggled on foot, or

horseback in the parched canyons. I felt a bit guilty, hunting history and enjoying the same rugged country from the comforts of a luxurious houseboat.

Today, modern travelers thrill to the beauties of this land from boats on the surface of 187-mile-long Lake Powell. The lake was created less than 10 years ago when Glen Canyon Dam plugged the waters of the Colorado River.

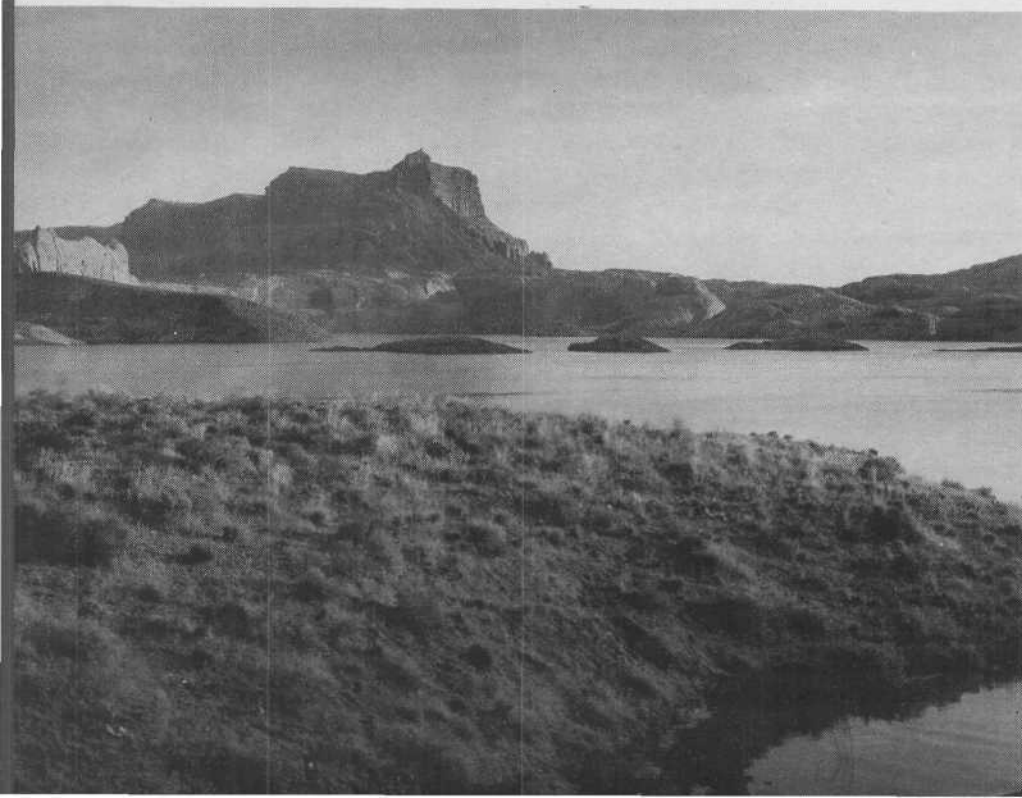
I have always been fascinated by the up-and-down country of southern Utah, and I have seen many areas of it one way or another. I have four-wheeled through the canyon country; rafted through boil-

*continued*





*Above: A sunset campfire in Lake Canyon. Below: Sunrise in Oak Canyon.*



ing rapids on the still-wild portions of the Colorado River, and flown over towering desert peaks. Some of these trips have been rugged, duplicating in a small way the rigors experienced by the pioneers.

But I hadn't seen the colorful and historic country that surrounds Lake Powell and I wanted to fill the gap. So, with my wife and two boys, I decided that a houseboat would be a fun and exciting way to follow people like explorer John Wesley Powell, or the ancient tracks of Anasazi Indians.

We made arrangements for our houseboat with Bullfrog Marina, Hanksville, Utah. We reserved a 47-foot boat and couldn't wait for the big day to arrive.

Not only did a houseboat seem like a great way to see Lake Powell, it seemed like a relaxing and comfortable way to enjoy a week's vacation hunting history. We would be doing a lot of traveling during the week, but in home-like comfort.

We took two days to drive from our home in Southern California to the Bullfrog Marina on the lake's northwest midriff. The night before we were to get our boat, we camped in the National Park Service campground at Bullfrog.

That night we became even more excited as we talked to Ranger Jim Carson, who told us about some of the things we would see and experience in the coming week.

Early the next morning we went to the dock and got the first look at our boat as a clean-up crew shampooed the carpets and completed a general clean-up before sending us off.

We bought some last-minute supplies at the marina store, and began to load. I was surprised to learn the boat was equipped with everything except food and bedding. The cupboards were filled with dishes, utensils, pots and pans, even carving knives. All we needed was our food, personal gear, camera and lots and lots of film.

I am not a sailor and the thought of maneuvering a 9-ton boat through the narrow canyons of Lake Powell had me a little nervous. But a dock crew of several young men at Bullfrog have the job of giving you a "driver's test" before you head out. Operating the boat proved to be quite simple. Using a little common sense and patience, anyone can operate a houseboat.

Our first day out began in early afternoon, so we headed 32 miles down lake



to the Escalante River Arm. This is a long, maze-like portion of the lake, created when waters backed up in the Escalante River canyon.

We arrived in early evening and made camp in our secret little cove, saving exploration for the next day. The sunset was long and slow as the towering canyon walls took on that seemingly inner glow. Nature's pace slowed and the deep green water in our cove turned to glass as the evening breeze stilled. It was a time for reflection. The canyon walls reflected in perfect duplication on the water's surface and I reflected upon those early explorers who had camped here before us.

The Escalante was the last major river discovered and mapped in the United States. The reason is obvious. This is a land of extreme difficulty for exploration.

I can understand why the early explorers came to this place. They were challenged by the unknown and the lure of discovery. But I marvel at their willingness to endure the hardships they did. The sacrifice they made to open this part of the West was supreme.

This was the root of my guilt as we enjoyed a filling dinner and watched bats beginning their nightly rounds, blind to all this beauty.

Our first full day on the lake began at dawn the next morning when a screaming sunrise woke us. The reds, yellows and blues, mixed with the dancing reflections from the green water on canyon walls was a morning show like none I had ever seen.

Today we would spend exploring the narrow side grottos of Escalante Canyon, so after breakfast, a morning swim and a short hike, we lifted anchor and set out to explore.

Davis Gulch was our first destination and after seeing it, we couldn't possibly imagine how we were going to enjoy the rest of the trip.

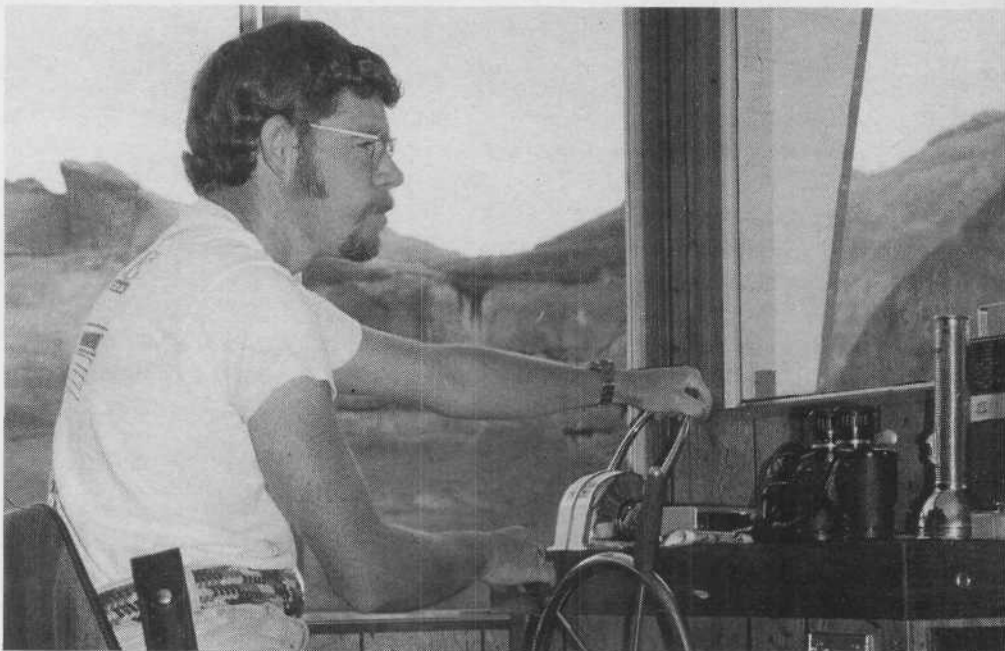
"I don't see how anything can be more beautiful than this," my wife said as we moved slowly up the canyon, not wider than our boat was long in some places.

The slit-like canyon towered 600 feet over our heads in spots and the red sandstone was decorated with drapes of patina drippings.

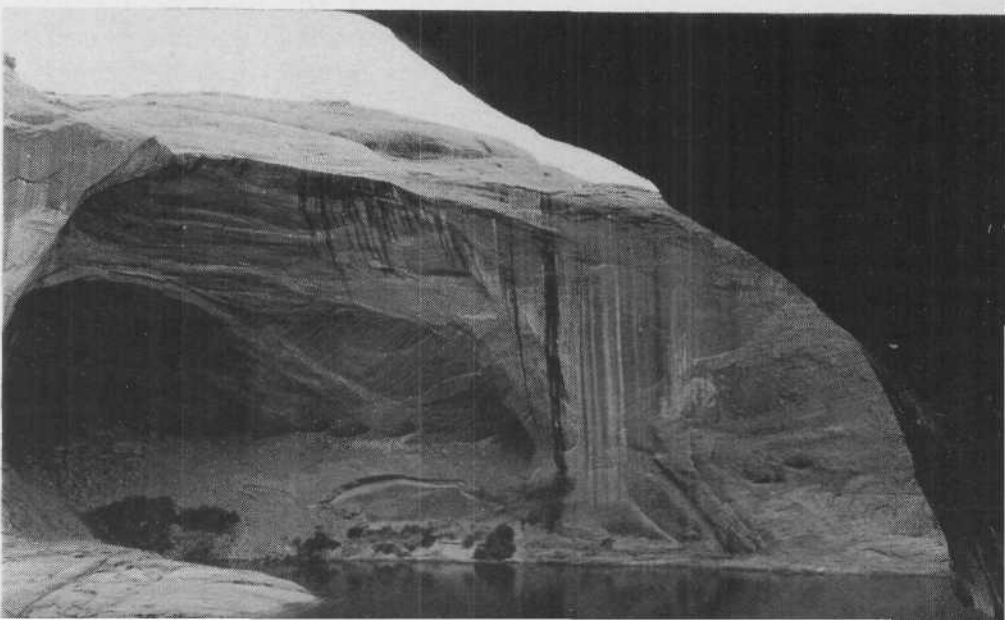
In Davis Gulch we found La Gorce Arch, a 75-foot high window in sandstone cliffs. This arch was named for a



*Underway in Iceberg Canyon.*



*Above: The author found no difficulty in operating the 47-foot houseboat. Below: A quiet cove on the Escalante River Arm.*



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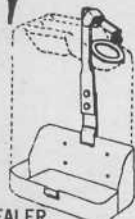
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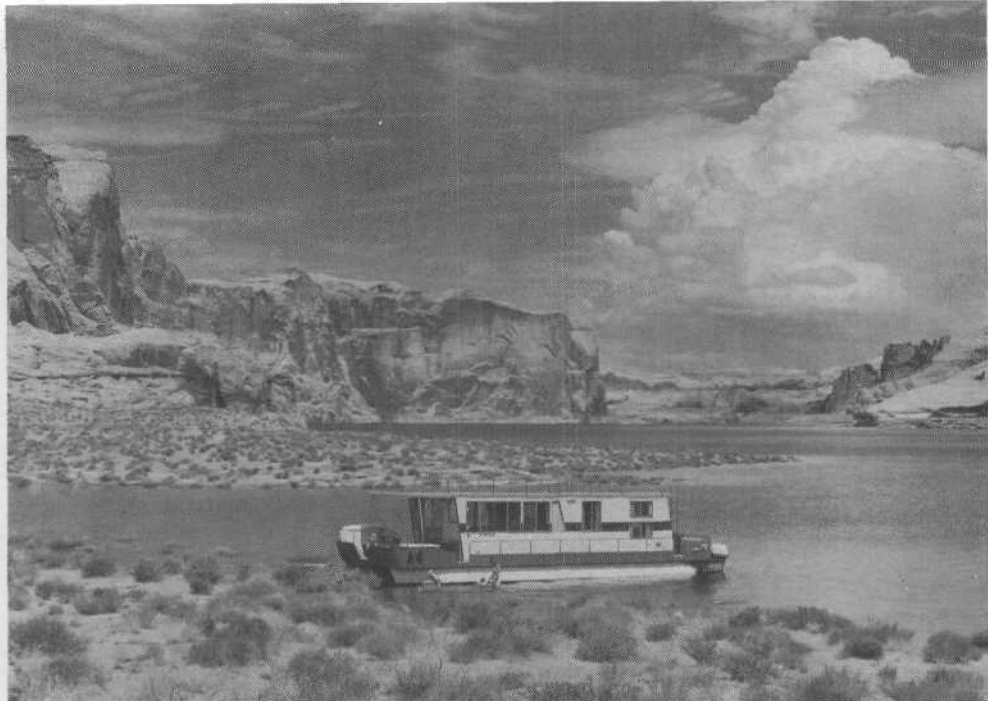
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*A lunch stop in the main channel of Lake Powell.*

former president of the National Geo-  
graphic Society. We liked it so well in  
Davis Gulch, that we decided to spend  
our second night in this sheltered can-  
yon.

We really appreciated our houseboat  
when it came time to make camp for the  
night. After a day of swimming, fishing  
and hiking, it was enjoyable to step into  
a hot shower, then sit down to a home-  
cooked meal, which often included fresh  
trout.

After dinner we sat on the edge of the  
boat and watched bluegill and carp com-  
pete for bits of scrap we tossed their  
way. The serenade tonight was from an  
unseen bird we named the "Wind-up  
Bird." He would begin a series of rapid  
whistle-like chirps that would gradually  
slow down as if his battery was going  
dead, or his main-spring winding down.  
He'd then wind himself up and do it all  
over again.

With the kids tucked in bed, my wife  
and I sat out on deck and watched the  
moon rise over the towering canyon  
walls, chasing the sun until it hid, leav-  
ing only darkness. An occasional splash  
of a hungry fish was the only sound to  
break the complete silence.

Houseboat living can make you lazy,  
so the second morning we slept in until 7  
A.M. But by that hour, nature is so alive  
and the canyon country so demanding of  
attention, that we were always up. After  
a quick breakfast and the morning swim  
in 80-degree water, we lifted anchor  
again and set out for Rainbow Bridge  
National Monument.

Having been a *Desert Magazine*  
reader for years, I have seen many pic-  
tures of Rainbow Bridge, the largest  
known natural formation of its kind. Be-  
fore Glen Canyon Dam was built, the  
only way to reach the bridge was a 14-  
mile trail from the east, or a six-mile  
walk from the Colorado River after a long  
boat ride.

Lake Powell now fills Rainbow Bridge  
Canyon to within a quarter mile of the  
arch. There is a dock there and a short  
trail leads to the magnificent structure.

I have seen many of nature's spectacu-  
lar sights, but few have been as impres-  
sive as Rainbow Bridge. This bowed col-  
umn of sandstone raises 309 feet and  
spans 278 feet.

To the Navajo, the bridge was a sacred  
thing and I had a similar feeling of spiri-  
tual awe as I walked beneath the arch. All  
of the pictures I had seen could not begin  
to show its grandeur.

I sat on a rock and watched as others  
walked the short distance from the boat  
dock to enjoy the view. There were old  
people and the very young. They probab-  
ly would not have seen the bridge in  
years past when the journey was long  
and hard.

By now, it would seem that our senses  
were being dulled by the constant  
pounding of nature's beauty in this land  
of superlatives. But each and every turn  
of the lake reveals a new drop-curtain  
scene as interesting as the last one.

We went no further toward the dam  
than Rainbow Canyon. Leaving the  
southern part of Lake Powell for future



houseboat adventures, we turned around there and began a slow trek back, exploring many of the interesting side canyons in search of natural beauty and history. We camped when and where the mood struck us.

In these hidden canyons, we found many things left behind by men before us, such as crude stairs cut in the steep sandstone cliffs by some early gold seeker. There were crumbling Anasazi ruins, and inscribed canyon walls where some ancient Indian hand sought to express an idea.

From the comfort of our houseboat we saw Hole-In-The-Rock, a tribute to the courage of early pioneers. When Mormon settlers reached the edge of the Colorado River Gorge in 1879, they knew they had to cross, so they cut a mile-long ramp down the sides of the canyon wall to the edge of the river. Horses and wagons were lowered down the 45-degree slide and the party of several hundred continued on across the river and settled what is now known as Bluff, Utah. It was an incredible feat in the settlement of the West.

All too soon, our week's adventure was coming to an end. We spent our last night in Lake Canyon and I hiked to the plateau above the lake to watch an impressive sunset through thunderheads over distant mountains.

As a family we enjoyed a campfire on the beach that night and talked about the ancient ones who had called these canyons home. We were sharing some of the closeness that the Anasazis must have shared in order to survive.

I can honestly say I have enjoyed few vacations more than this one. The reasons are many—the beauty and grandeur of the lake and canyon country, the feeling of adventure following the spirit of early explorers and even earlier residents. But the luxury of the houseboat had to top the list.

Houseboating on Lake Powell is a great way to see some of America's most spectacular desert country while enjoying all the comforts of home. But a word of advice.

You can't see all of the lake the first time around, and I imagine even the second trip would leave a lot unexplored. So you had better plan on making several trips, because one won't be enough. I know. I'm already planning for another trip someday soon. □

# GLEN CANYON

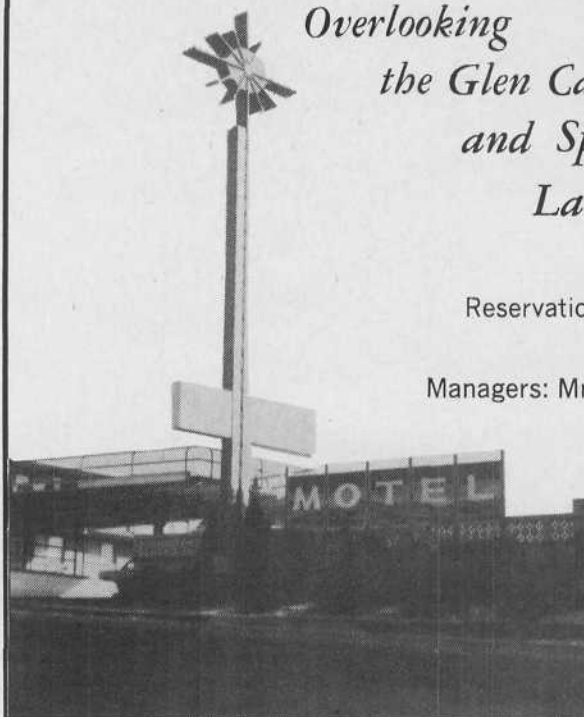
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Left:  
Debbi Lantz  
found old  
bottle at  
Ridenour Mine.  
Opposite Page:  
On the trail  
to Meriwitica  
Canyon.

# EXPLORING THE

**This article encompasses the area of the Colorado River west of the National Park and east of Lake Mead. This area is largely Indian reservation land and the proper permits must be obtained for entry.**

**I**MAGINE A canyon five miles in width, the upper rims reaching out in long narrow points; below are wide terraces, slashed with tributary canyons. At the bottom, a river flowing in a gorge 2,000 to 3,000 feet deep. Add to this cinder cones on the esplanade and in the gorge, lava flows cascading over the steep sides of the gorge and a volcanic neck in the center of the river. This is spectacular country, yet most of the residents of Arizona are unaware of its existence!

This is the western Grand Canyon, the 100 miles beyond the national park,

which has been aptly called the "Lost Hundred."

I had lived and explored in Arizona for over 10 years before even hearing of it; then spent many weekends exploring on both sides of the canyon.

The Hualpai Indian Reservation joins the canyon on the south for most of its 100-mile length, but the north side is reached only from the Arizona Strip, that isolated section of Arizona between the canyon and Utah.

The Hualpai Reservation was nearest, so I began my explorations there, stopping at the Indian trading center of Peach Springs, which straddles Highway 66 east of Kingman, to obtain a permit and pay the fee required for entrance to the reservation.

The first trip was down scenic Peach Springs canyon to the river, the only place a road reaches the bottom of the

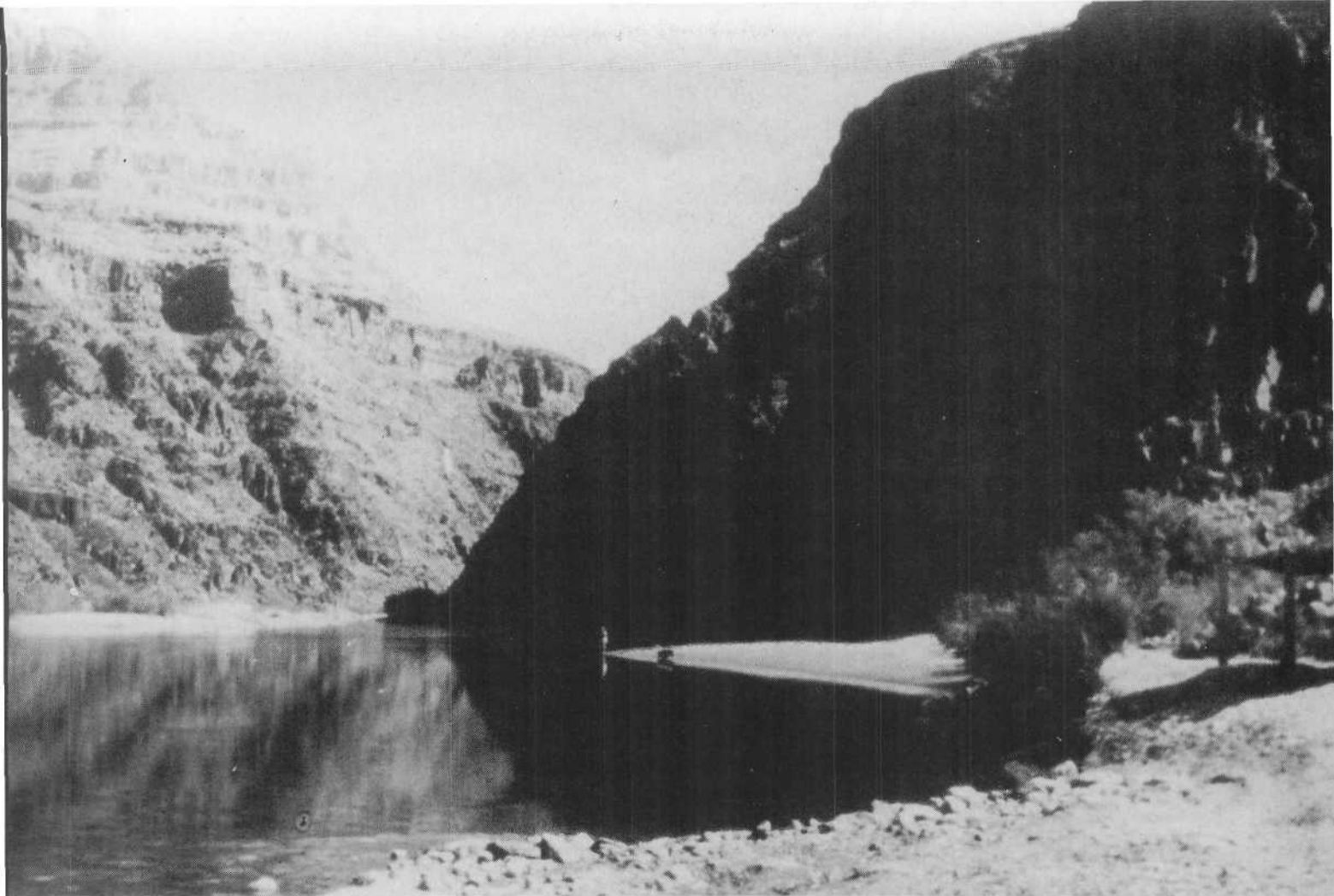
Grand Canyon. In 20 miles, the road drops from 4,800 feet elevation at Peach Springs to 1,334 at the confluence of Diamond Creek and the Colorado River.

It was February and so warm we did not even need a campfire, but the next night, when we camped on the plateau above, water froze in our water jugs.

The Hualpais and residents of nearby towns come here to fish. There are two small campgrounds, one halfway down canyon, the other by the river. The road is good except for the last two or three miles which may be rough in spots where Diamond Creek crosses the road. After bad storms, portions of this lower end may be washed out.

In the late 1800s, the old Diamond Creek Hotel was located on the banks of Diamond Creek. Visitors from all over the United States are said to have come by horse-drawn stage to view the Grand





# "LOST HUNDRED"

by IRIS WEBSTER

Canyon from this spot. After creation of the national park to the east and building of the railroad there, this area was by-passed and forgotten.

One of my most rugged but rewarding trips was up Prospect Valley to the gorge. Seven miles east of Peach Springs, the wide graveled Supai road leads north from Highway 66. At the abandoned lumbering village of Frazier Wells, we turned left on a good ranch road which winds through ponderosa pines and sagebrush for 15 miles until it drops over the Aubrey Cliffs. At the foot of the cliffs, a road turns right which took us five miles, and then turned right again on a barely visible track through the grass of Prospect Valley. Without a topographic map we would never have found it.

From here on it is strictly for four-wheelers, as the old prospecting road

makes 12 crossings of Prospect Creek. We spent so much time moving rocks and mending washed out banks, it took three hours to cover 14 miles.

Prospect Valley widens out as it approaches the gorge, becoming part of the esplanade. Two cinder cones stand at the east end, one partly destroyed. From its slopes we looked down into Prospect Canyon, a steep, narrow gash through lava. The original Prospect Canyon was buried by a lava flow, but Prospect Creek has excavated a new one through the heart of a cinder cone. We could see the Colorado River flowing below Vulcan's Throne, a huge cone across the gorge at Toroweap, in the Grand Canyon National Monument. On the cliffs were the lava cascades which once formed a lava dam 2,000 feet high, according to geological reports. The river has breached the dam until all that is left are boulders forming

Lava Falls. Upstream from Vulcan's Throne, but not visible from here, is Vulcan's Forge, a large volcanic neck in the middle of the river.

On a later trip, we took the same road from Frazier Wells, turning right again at the Aubrey Cliffs, but instead of turning on the Prospect Valley road, continued straight on the Ridenour Mill road till we came out on the upper rim overlooking the esplanade and the lava flows in the Whitmore Wash area across the gorge.

The road winds down over the rim, but we decided to hike the approximately three miles to the mine workings. This old mine dates back to the days when ore was carried over the rim on burro back. Portions of chimneys and walls are still standing. We found pieces of green copper ore and a sun-purpled bottle and peaked in the cavern-like entrance to the

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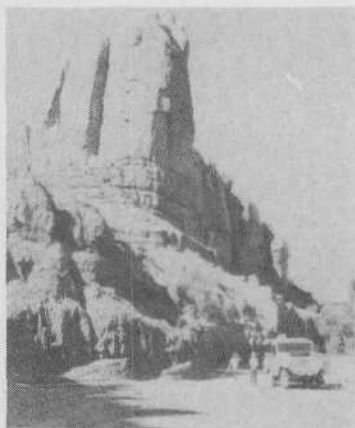
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main shaft. A pickup truck could negoti-  
ate the road over the rim, but it would be  
best to check for boulders in the road be-  
fore starting down.

The Buck and Doe road turns right  
from Highway 66 two miles west of  
Peach Springs. Winding through range  
land for 50 miles, it finally ends at view-  
points above the river. Two side roads  
took us to interesting tributary canyons.

The first turned right seven miles  
north of the highway. After nine miles,  
we reached cliffs overlooking Hindu  
Canyon; now it became a 4WD road  
twisting down in the canyon, then up out  
of the north end of Hindu, past Bridge  
Canyon and on to viewpoints above the  
gorge. Since then, a torrential storm has  
destroyed the road leading out of Hindu,  
making it necessary to hike the remain-  
der of the way.

At the head of Bridge Canyon, an old  
pack trail switchbacks down into this  
wide tributary canyon and then follows  
along above the river to Separation Can-  
yon.

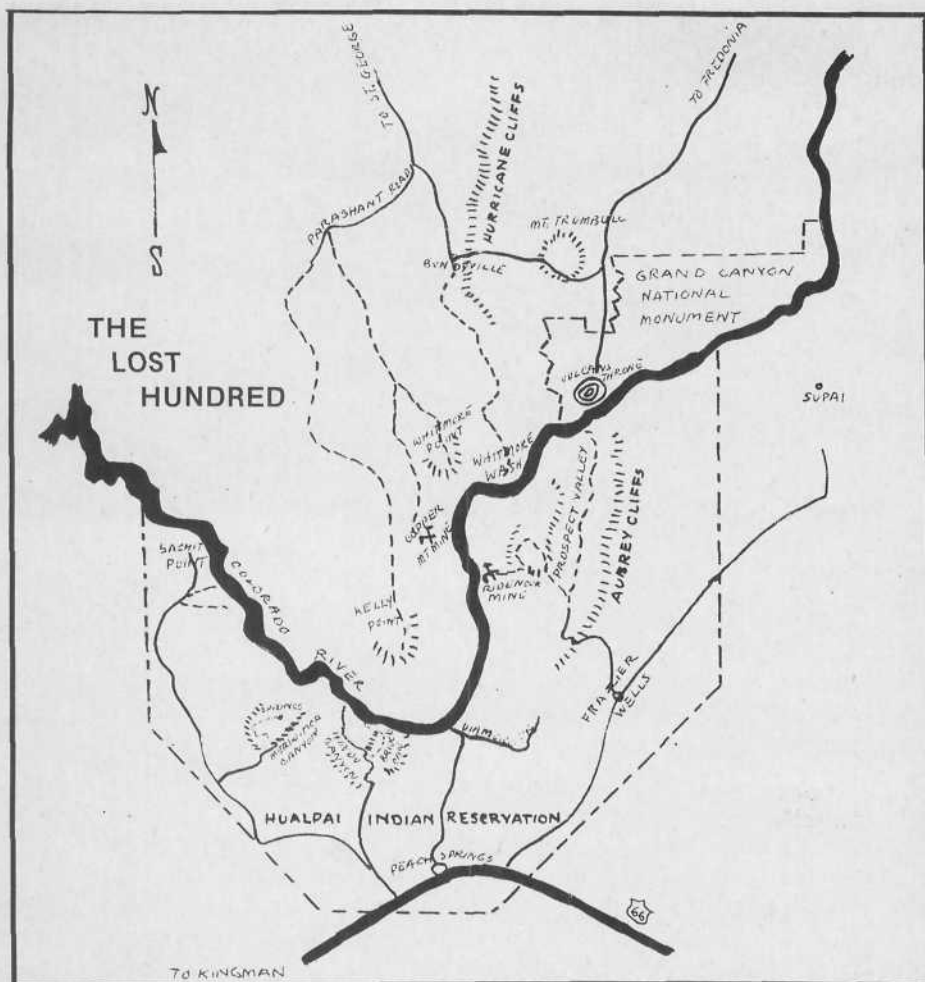
From the Bridge Canyon turnoff, Buck  
and Doe continues north for 18 miles to  
another right hand road leading eight  
miles to the overlook at Meriwitica Can-  
yon. A steep trail drops down to the can-  
yon floor over talus slopes. Three miles  
down canyon a large spring with a  
canopy of cottonwoods makes an ideal  
campsite.

Care is necessary when hiking in these  
isolated areas; it is many miles to a hab-  
itation. Also, the weather can be  
changeable, as was experienced on a  
bright spring day after hiking to the  
spring for our lunch. Mid-afternoon  
brought a dust storm, blotting out the  
canyon walls. As we hiked the return  
route, dust turned to rain, then to snow  
as we climbed a steep slope over bould-  
ers (having missed the trail), and emerg-  
ed at the canyon rim just at dark, half  
frozen and exhausted.

Meriwitica Canyon is said to be the an-  
cestral home of the Hualpais and related  
tribes. According to legend, they all liv-  
ed in this canyon where the springs  
made cultivation of crops possible.  
When the population became too large,  
the Indians separated into groups, going  
in various directions. Only the tribe now  
living on the reservation remained.

Twenty-five miles further, the main  
road reached Bachit Point where the  
abandoned upper station of the huge





tramway of the U. S. Guano Mine Company teeters on the brink of the canyon. It was built to remove guano from Bat Cave across the canyon. Shortly before reaching Bachit, two roads turn off to Honagi and Quartermaster Points which also give good views of the canyon.

On my first trip north of the canyon, I drove to Las Vegas, Nevada, then north-east to St. George, Utah, and south 75 miles to the Grand Canyon National Monument at Toroweap. On later trips, I went east by way of Fredonia, just below the Utah border, then 65 miles south-west to the monument.

A primitive campground is located on the very edge of the 3,000-foot abyss at Toroweap, but we drove back a quarter-mile to camp. There are beautiful views of the river and gorge from Toroweap, but it is *not* for one who minds heights.

Next day, we took a road leading around the south side of Vulcan's Throne. At the end, a rough lave trail leads down in to the gorge to the banks of the Colorado.

Sixteen miles north of Toroweap is a primitive campground on the south

slopes of Mt. Trumbull, beside Nixon Springs. This is the only source of water for many miles and we always filled our containers here.

A word of warning—gasoline is practically unobtainable in the Strip, ranches are far apart and water is scarce, so anyone venturing on these roads should carry a plentiful supply of both.

Several miles beyond Mt. Trumbull, the road drops over the Hurricane Cliffs to the Mormon community locally known as Bundyville. Here we took a road leading south 25 miles to Whitmore Wash, down river from Toroweap. This is not a road for passenger cars; there is one steep section and many rough spots where the road traverses lava flows.

This was the area seen from the Ridenour Mine road and one of the most spectacular places explored. Cinder cones and lava flows cover large areas and Whitmore Canyon is filled with a lava flow as is Toroweap, this making it possible for roads to reach the inner gorge.

All things considered, if you enjoy beautiful scenery and solitude, the "Lost Hundred" is for you! □



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# Thimble Full of Gold

by SLIM PICKINGS

SINCE THE first publication in March, 1965 of black gold found by an anonymous person in California's Anza-Borrego Desert, many persons have speculated or actually searched for his source of discovery. I admit to being one of those individuals who eagerly followed the stories published in *Desert Magazine*.

Many hours were spent pouring over topographic maps in the anticipation of being able to pinpoint the general area of this fabled desert secret. In time, it became an exercise in fruitless treasure hunting. But, like the American dream, the hope and anticipation of making the discovery again never completely faded. That dream finally came true in 1971, but not by the direct method of solving the clues written by the anonymous author.

Sometime during 1970, I read a story about two prospectors who, in 1910, found black gold about 20 miles from Brawley. The name of the wash that the prospectors traveled turned out to be a name tagged by one of the prospectors which suited his description of the place—a not too uncommon event in bygone days. This misnomer became apparent after a thorough check of topographic maps and a subsequent check with older residents of Ocotillo Wells failed to locate the place. The essence of their story, however, seemed to merit some credence that the occurrence of black gold in the desert was probable. I thought that all I needed to do was to learn the correct name of the wash and this would place me in the proper gener-

al area.

So it was that I decided to take a week's vacation between Christmas and New Years to devote a complete search for an area that might look promising. After much work, the camper was loaded with sufficient provisions, mini bike and metal detector and I was ready to roll. Nature suddenly changed my plans when She decided to unleash one of the worst storms to hit the Anza-Borrego Desert. The trip was definitely off.

If one can believe published stories of the Old West, many lucky bonanzas have been attributed to an old prospector chasing his burro, or his animal somehow managed to kick over a rich piece of float and the old-timer either went to his glory rich or ended up as a luckless target by some Injun, or whatever, depending on the writer's fancy. In my case, Nature made it possible for me to locate the proper wash.

Since it was impossible to travel in the desert washes due to the heavy rains now pelting Borrego, I decided to devote some of my free time to filing my old treasure magazines into new binders. It was then that I ran across a short four paragraph story about another incident of still another discoverer of black gold in Borrego. This story, however, mentioned the name of two washes, plus some other pertinent landmarks. A quick check of the topographic map verified the information and this story corroborated the one of the two prospectors. To say that I was excited would be an understatement. A major piece of the jigsaw puzzle was complete. Consequently,

had I gone to the desert as originally planned, I can honestly say I would have been in the wrong search area.

It was not until the following spring of 1971 that I was able to make a weekend trip to the desert to verify my finding. I spent nearly a full day trying to find my way into the area. When looking at a topographic map, everything looks exceedingly simple. Only when one arrives at the scene and begins to look for reference marks does one become confused by the ground level topographic features of the terrain.

I finally drove up a long wash until it was no longer safe traveling for the camper. After making base camp, I unloaded the mini bike and taking a canteen and my metal detector I continued up the wash. About two miles from the camp, and fighting soft sand all the way, the master chain link on the mini bike broke. It was either hand-push the bike back to camp, or salvage some wire from my metal detector to rewire the chain onto the sprocket. I chose the latter and finally made it back to camp. During the initial exploratory trip, I was able to locate specific landmarks from the stories and I felt that I was getting close to the probable area.

The following day I was reduced to walking legs. As it turned out, this proved to be easier than fighting the loose sand with the bike. Taking a canteen and knapsack with food, a small drywasher and a compass, I headed up the wash again.

After walking about two miles, I turned into a small cut flanked by low



ridged banks which seemed to fit the old sourdough's story. I must have covered about another mile drypanning the several stream beds in this maze until I finally came to an area which began to show more traces of gold. Eventually I arrived near a small knoll and I began working around and up this in earnest. The enclosed photograph shows the results of this drypanning.

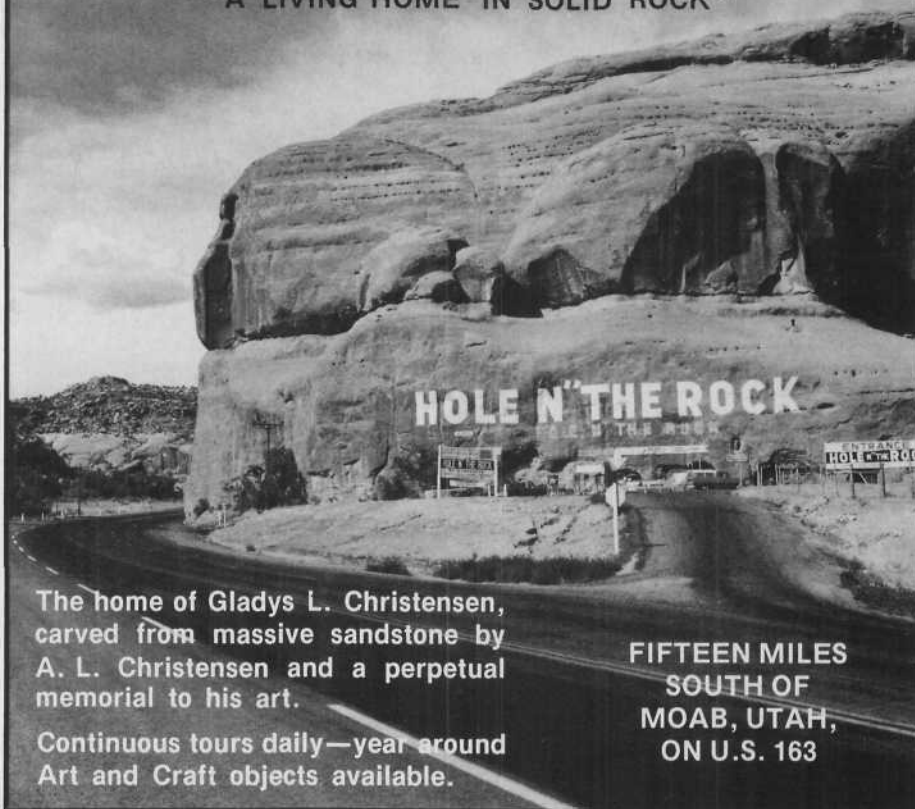
The majority of the gold flakes that I recovered I have cleaned of their black coating. The remaining black nuggets show traces of gold through the black coating which I attribute to the abrasive action of the sand during drywashing. I'm also including three small flakes which you may keep for display at *Desert Magazine*. In some respects I'm sorry I am being stingy by not sending you larger nuggets. This short weekend trip resulted in mighty slim pickin's and because of my job I have not been able to return to the desert to pan for more of them. However, these samples should be sufficient to prove my point that the black gold is there.

During the series of stories published by *Desert Magazine*, many theories were advanced for the presence of the black gold being at this location. None of these theories sounded really plausible to me. I think the old prospector was possibly closer to the truth. In his story he said that in 1910 there was a spring about a half-mile or so from this knoll where he made his camp. He said that when he tried to make coffee from the water, it turned his pot black. Possibly at one time the spring flowed over the knoll, depositing the gold there or at least coating the gold which eroded in situ. In time, the stream eroded away the surrounding area exposing the knoll. Since 1910, the water table has steadily dropped until today the spring has completely disappeared. Finally, I brought back several rock samples about a mile from this area which analysis indicated were gold-bearing. Thus, I believe the gold was born right there and not carried in by man.

Finding the gold was an exciting experience, but it was equally thrilling to survey the surrounding area and then compare it with the clues furnished by the prospector and the anonymous writer. Then, with 20-20 hindsight I said, "Yeh, this is the place, just as they described it." □

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**B**ACK IN the pages of time, when Indians and antelope roamed a great valley on the western end of California's Mojave Desert, the "Antelope People" called their homeland, "garden of the sun." Blessed with sufficient rainfall and followed by months of brilliant sunshine, this semi-arid region supported an abundance of plants and waist-high grasses.

Mountain ranges, heavily forested with pinyon pines, junipers and oaks, encircled the valley on three sides. The enclosed "high-plains" sustained tremendous stands of grotesquely-beautiful Joshua trees and lush junipers. Numerous springs bubbled forth. Small ponds and lakes occupied low areas where wild game and birds flourished. Throughout the valley's length and breadth, rock buttes proudly raised their colorful peaks. They seemed to be the "overseers" of this region we now call Antelope Valley.

Though broiling sun and torrid breezes scorched the valley during long, hot summers, fall brought rejuvenation and colorful dress. Fields of blue curls and massive clumps of rabbitbrush displayed their multitude of blossoms. Winter brought chilling winds, rain and often a mantle of snow. However, it was a land of plenty for flora, fauna and man.

Spring in the "garden of the sun" was a sight to dazzle the beholder. The valley became a patchwork quilt of color as miles and miles of wildflowers came into bloom. Fields of deep, blue lupine, creamy desert dandelion, yellow coreopsis, purple owl's clover, red paint brush, golden-hued alkali goldfields, misty-blue gilia and lavender thistle-sage were but







Where an "ocean" of California Poppies once bloomed in the Antelope Valley, only a few large acreages still remain. Not content to watch the poppies and other beautiful wildflowers disappear, dedicated women took up the challenge to save them. The result is a Wildflower State Park and now the generations to come will never ask . . .

# "Where Have All The Flowers Gone?"

by MARY FRANCES STRONG

Photos by Jerry Strong



a few of many flowers that formed sheets of color over the valley. None, however, were so colorful or prolific as the California Poppy. At the peak of bloom, they appeared as a brilliant red-orange sea flowing through the valley and inundating the lower hillsides.

Idyllic in its setting, the Antelope Valley was not destined to remain home of the Indian and antelope. In the 1860s, the first settlers came. Imagine the impact of their first spring—the land around them ablaze with color! Such great masses of wildflowers must have seemed almost unbelievable. Little did they know, or even suspect, that 100 years hence their descendants would ask, "Where have all the flowers gone?"

The answer is obvious. They succumbed—as did the Indian and antelope—to progress. The early settlers lived in comparative harmony with nature since they were mainly cattle ranchers. But, mass colonization efforts in the valley during the 1880s and 1890s began to take their toll. The conversion of large acreages of land to orchards and grain farms reduced the numbers of virgin fields and seriously limited forage for the antelope. The latter had already been deeply effected by the building of a railroad through the desert. Unwilling to cross the tracks for food, water or even escape, they became fair game for hunters and their numbers rapidly dwindled.

Development of the valley continued and, by 1925, the Indian and antelope

were gone. Wildflowers still bloomed, but few people realized the threat to their perpetuation due to the insidious and relentless encroachment of man.

Each spring brought even greater peril—thousands and thousands of sheep brought in to graze the land. Often called the "woolly locusts," they are that, indeed, when turned loose in a field of blooming wildflowers. Since they ravage the field before seed has formed, there is nothing left to sprout and bloom the following year.

No doubt many people had begun to notice a decline in wildflowers by 1937. However, probably one of the first to publicly ask, "Where have all the flowers gone?" was Ruth Munz Etz, granddaughter of pioneer John Munz who came to the valley in 1888. Her father, Eli Munz, and his brother Eric, operated a large cattle ranch of tremendous acreage which included Antelope Butte. The latter area was considered the most spectacular and extensive poppy field remaining in the valley. Ruth, and her sister, Phyllis, had recently helped to establish Joshua Tree Parlor of the Native Daughters. As their first project, the organization decided to take up the cause "to preserve an area for poppies and wildflowers."

"We didn't anticipate many problems," Ruth Munz Etz told me. "We felt certain we could convince Dad to donate the land." And they did!

The Native Daughters worked hard to

raise sufficient funds to send Attorney William D. Keller, Jr., to Sacramento. As their representative, he presented the idea and offer of land to the California State Park System. Unfortunately, there proved to be numerous requirements for deeding the land to the State. When it became obvious many of them could not be met, the Native Daughters reluctantly gave up the project.

Their work had not been in vain, since it had directed attention to dwindling wildflower areas and the fact that California's State Flower, *Eschscholzia californica*—California Poppy, was endangered. Almost three decades were to pass before further efforts were made to set aside a wildflower reserve.

During the mid-1960s, the Environmental Resources Division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation undertook a five-year study on the distribution and flowering patterns of the California Poppy. Their findings were published in a report entitled, "Antelope Valley Poppy Reserve." They had concluded that, "Preservation and continued stewardship of this natural resource under the California State Park System is definitely in the public interest." The site recommended as the ideal location for such a reserve was the Antelope Butte—Fairmont Butte area. Finally, the idea and suggested location presented so many years ago by the Native Daughters had borne fruit.

In the Third Annual Report of the California State Parks Foundation, Chairman Joseph Long states, "In the year ahead (1974), the Foundation's priorities are clear. Our first objective must be to assure the preservation of the California Poppy."

This top priority for the "Poppy Park," as it has come to be known, is largely due to the dedicated efforts by members of the Lancaster Woman's Club. Upon learning the findings of the Five-year Study, they quickly voted to take up the cause. A special "Wildflower Preservation Committee" was appointed in April, 1971 and the monumental task of fund raising began.

Committee members appeared at dozens of community functions and launched others in the drive to save the wildflowers. The effort became state-wide as Garden Clubs, Native Sons and numerous other organizations joined with them. Posters soon told of the drive "to

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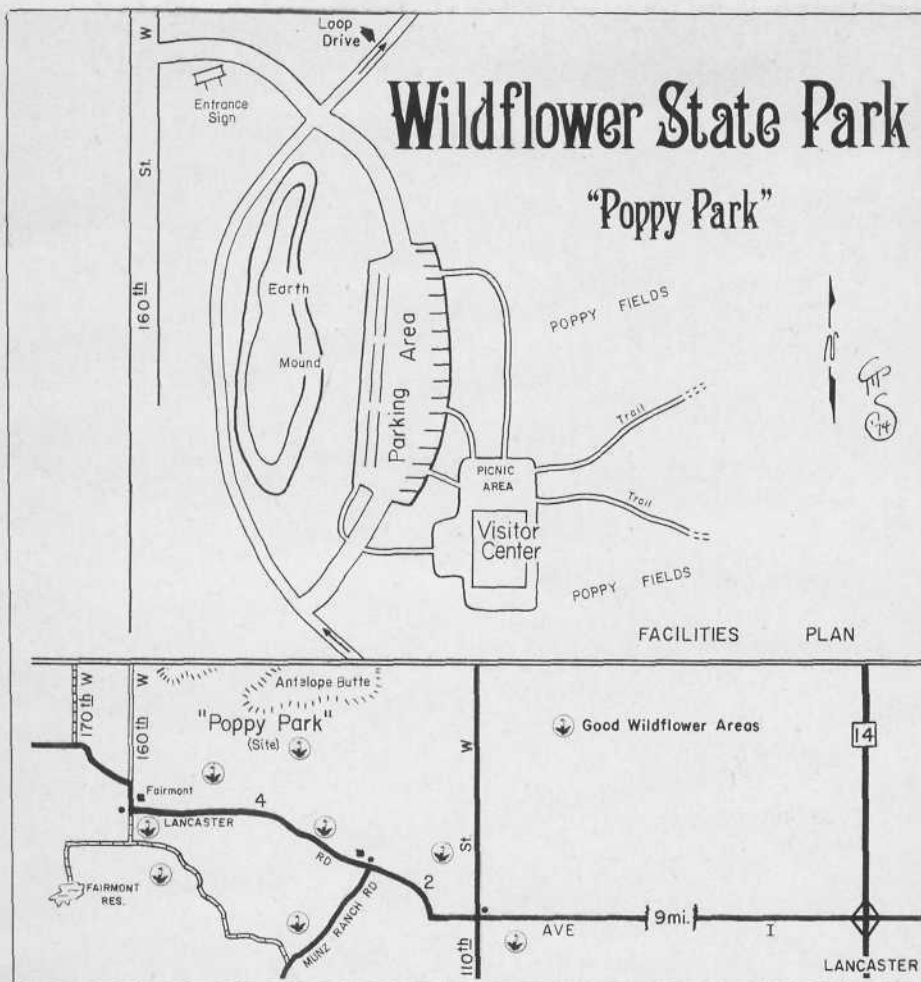


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save the poppies" and colorful decals were sold to the now interested public. In recognition of their dedication to the task, Shell Oil Company selected the Lancaster Woman's Club for First Place Award in the field of Environmental Conservation. Other such honors have since come their way.

Today, the Poppy Park is becoming a reality. The purchase of nearly a thousand acres of land on Antelope Butte is being concluded. Negotiation for further acreage is in progress. Fund raising continues with added vigor, since each dollar donated is matched by the Federal Open Spaces Fund. Obtaining the park is a "people's project." All of us who treasure the beauty in the great outdoors have an obligation to help save the wildflowers for ourselves and posterity. A donation of \$5.00 or more will bring you a "deed" to wildflower land within the Reserve. Contributions should be sent to: Wildflower Preservation Committee, P. O. Box 379, Lancaster, California 93534.

Development of the park will include a Visitor's Center, picnic area and comfort station. A loop road will enable visitors

to view the wildflowers from their cars. Several foot trails will give more intimate views and the opportunity to take photographs. Special displays, photographs and painting of wildflowers are planned for exhibit in the Visitor's Center. Park Rangers will provide informative programs on the history, ecology and natural resources of the region. Of particular interest are the tentative plans of the California Department of Fish and Game to re-establish a small herd of antelope in the Reserve. The poppies and other wildflowers are there now and may be enjoyed each spring.

Poppy Park is scheduled for completion in early 1976 when the United States will be celebrating its Bicentennial Year. Its dedication will make an outstanding contribution to both state and nation.

In saving the poppies and other wildflowers, part of California's heritage has been preserved for the enjoyment of all people. Spring visitors to Antelope Valley will always be able to gaze across a brilliant expanse of blossoms and share the thoughts of the early pioneers—"the beautiful poppy is one of the West's Golden Treasures." □

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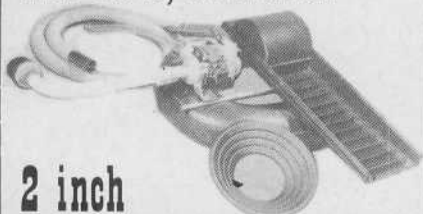
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*Private groups run the Green through Desolation, but some prefer to stay in larger boats for the worst rapids.*

## DESOLATION CANYON

*Continued from Page 15*

features along the way, or for savoring the silent, brooding mood of the deep gorge.

On the first two days of a five-day float beginning at Sand Wash, wildly beautiful and unspoiled canyons dominate, and the placid river is punctuated only occasionally by rapids. More rapids appear on the third day, and on the third and fourth days, traces of earlier human use of the canyon appear. On the last day, evidences of modern civilization become apparent, intruding far up the canyon from the vicinity of the Utah town of Green River, and culminating at a state park launch ramp in the outskirts of this town.

Along the entire trip there is enough to see to interest almost anyone. Trees, wildflowers, cacti, reeds and other plant life abound at river level, and wild animals can be spotted at times. Soaring eagles, several types of waterfowl and other bird species are plentiful. Many sidecanyons add crystal-clear stream water to the muddy Green, and springs are everywhere. Catfish are easily caught in the river, and icy tributaries offer exciting trout fishing.

The river banks and nearby bluffs also exhibit numerous archeological sites, and still others are found in sidecanyons that contain water. For example, a mile or two up Rock Creek Canyon, sandstone walls display prehistoric Indian petroglyphs of the Fremont culture. Along part of the float trip, the east side of the canyon is within the Uinta-Ouray Indian Reservation.

More recent human history is represented in the canyon by the remains of long-abandoned pioneer ranch buildings made of native stone and local timber. One such, at the mouth of Rock Creek Canyon, has a rock house, several log structures, sheds, corrals and a large assortment of antique farming equipment still standing as though deserted only yesterday. Open fields still exhibit plow furrows made 30 years ago. The mile-long irrigation system that brought water to the cleared land is dry but still largely serviceable. Consideration is being given to preserving this particular ranch as a state historic site.

Another old ranch with stone-walled buildings, some 25 miles farther down the canyon, was not so highly developed, but the structures are still standing. One sod-covered roof now supports a healthy stand of pad cactus. There are tales of yet another early ranch in the upper part



of the canyon whose owner built a fireplace out of oil-shale rock that will yield at least 30 gallons of combustible oil per ton. His "house-warming" turned out to be excessively warm when his entire chimney started blazing!

A final historic highlight seen on the last day, not far from the end of the journey, is an old concrete dam over which the river flows in an artificial "rapid," and the picturesque old waterwheel that stands at one end of the dam. This wheel was once used to lift water to irrigate a nearby ranch.

The geology of the entire river gorge is fascinating, as the river cuts deeply into Mesozoic formations. Desolation Canyon is largely the red-brown Green River Formation, while the gray-colored deposits of the Wasatch Formation give Gray Canyon its name. Toward the end of the journey, colorful buttes of the Mesa Verde Group stand like lordly castles on the horizon.

For those with keen eyes, natural stone arches are abundant on the canyon cliffs and skyline. Some of these are truly gigantic. Others are smaller but very picturesque.

An interesting booklet that presents the geologic story of Desolation and Gray Canyons, as well as historic and human-interest highlights, can be obtained either from the float trip outfitters or its publisher in Denver. The title of this fascinating book is *River Runners' Guide to the Canyons of the Green and Colorado Rivers, Desolation and Gray Canyons.* Other volumes of this series cover three other sections of these lengthy rivers. These books provide mile-by-mile descriptions of the river gorges, and also list and rate their many rapids. The volume on Desolation and Gray Canyons begins at Oray, Utah, at mile 128.2, ends at mile 0.0 at the railroad bridge near Green River, Utah, and is a "must" for anyone taking this journey who is interested in the natural or human history of the canyon. U.S. Geological Survey maps of the region are also available in the 7.5 and 15 minute series. These maps may be obtained from the U.S.G.S. or any retail outlet that sells such maps.

Perhaps the best part of a float trip down the Green River is the mood, the emotional flavor it imparts. City-weary souls seem to draw strength from the silent majesty of the soaring, crenellated cliffs, and jaded spirits are uplifted and

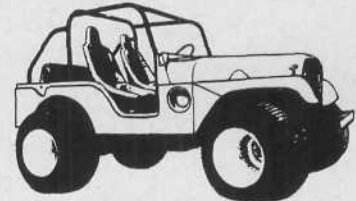
vitalized by the companionship of those sharing the adventure. Days are filled with scenic beauty, exciting rapids-running, shoreward explorations, water fights and cooling floats beside the rafts while wearing life jackets for safety. Overnight stops are highlighted with swims in cold, clear streams, short hikes, campfire meals and activities, and sleeping under a sky filled with stars and nightbird song. Altogether, these inevitably create a sense of strong comradeship that is a rare thing in the hurly-burly of modern living. Regaining this lost empathy for humanity, and nature, too, is very worthwhile.

The two stretches of the same magnificent rivergorge that were named Desolation and Gray by Major John Wesley Powell may have seemed desolate and gray to the fearful men on that first expedition in to the unknown. But to those who know that danger and death do not lie ahead, the names are inappropriate because this spectacular gorge is a thing of massive, primitive beauty, a haven of unspoiled natural history, and a sky-vaulted museum of time-shattered dreams of yesteryear's pioneers. □

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# Rambling on Rocks

by Glenn and Martha Vargas

## TALC: NO. 1 IN HARDNESS

WE ARE often asked about the various minerals that are used as the hardness standards. There are 10 (talc, gypsum, calcite, apatite, fluorite, orthoclase, quartz, topaz, corundum and diamond), and are known as the Mohs hardness scale. The scale was devised many years ago by a mineralogist named Mohs. When the scale was devised, common minerals were taken as the indicators in order that examples would be easily available. The choice of some of the indicator minerals was somewhat unfortunate, as some are only slightly softer or harder than the next indicator. One of the minerals (orthoclase) is really incorrect, and we shall discuss these inequities in a later column.

This column is the first in a series that will discuss these minerals. Not only are these minerals common, but they are of interest to many people, as well as mineralogists. There are some interesting stories to tell about most of them.

Talc, the mineral to indicate the softest on the scale, was an excellent choice. It is very common, and there are no other common minerals that are softer. The mineral is used for many commercial applications, thus it is also economically important.

Talc is a magnesium silicate with about five percent water. Part of the wa-

ter is evidently a simple mixture with the mineral, as about half is driven off at a low heat. The other half will not go off until the temperature is very high, suggesting that it is part of the talc molecule. The water percentage is variable, and impurities are often present. These variations may cause it to be a bit harder, and it will sometimes be as much as 1½ in hardness.

Talc is a decomposition product of a number of non-aluminous magnesium silicates. It is a product of weathering, in which the water enters the original mineral. This hydration changes the molecule, and also contributes to the softness. Accompanying the softness is a characteristic slippery feel.

It can be readily seen that if talc is a decomposition product of a number of minerals, it should have varying characteristics. It usually is a massive, chalk-like material, and is known as steatite. When it is impure, it is called soapstone. It also appears as thin sheets, much like mica, and in this form is probably derived from members of the chlorite group. Often it is soft granular, or finely flaked.

The commonest color is white, or nearly so, but it often is a pleasing green. Other colors such as brown to reddish are known, but these are attributed to impurities.

Probably the first use of talc was the formation of large utensils such as wash tubs and sinks. These were easy to produce with ordinary tools. They were water-resistant, and not easily broken. People living close to the land have always prized talc for utensils. The only problem in their use was the original placement of such a heavy utensil, but this usually was a one-time problem.

Quick to follow was the use of slabs for fireplace hearthstones and mantels, and also table tops. Today, it is used for table tops in chemical laboratories and factor-

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ies It offers a smooth, durable surface that is virtually untouched by harsh chemicals. As it does not readily decompose under extreme heat, it has been used for furnace linings.

Another early use of talc was for a dusting powder, commonly known as talcum powder. The mineral was simply reduced to a very fine powder and used for the dry lubrication of skin, cloth or other moving articles that tended to chafe. It then followed that it would be used as a cosmetic to cover skin blemishes or unsightly spots. This use is small at present, and has been taken over by other materials such as some starches. Talc was not easy to remove from skin folds, and the newer materials do not show this feature so strongly.

During the last years of the past century and the early years of this one, it was used extensively for the tips of gas burners. Any gas burners in use today usually have a ceramic tip. The tailor of this same era used a small piece of soapstone to mark his cloth preparatory to cutting. During that period, most cloth used by tailors was dark in color, thus the white line produced by the soapstone stick was easily visible. Today, most cloths are lighter in color, and if a marker is used, it must be of some other material. The slate pencil of the schoolchild of this period was soapstone. Today's machinist still uses a stick of soapstone to mark metals preparatory to cutting or forming them.

Early papermakers used talc as a filler to give the paper a smooth surface. Much of present-day printing is done by the lithographic process. Often a type-written page is used instead of setting type. The paper used for the typing is known as clay-coated paper, and talc is the clay coating. Talc is also used as a sizing in cloth to give it body. The use of sizing today is limited almost entirely to

cotton cloth; the synthetics do not usually need sizing.

The mineral collector seldom becomes enthusiastic about talc, unless it is in the form of a faithful reproduction of a crystal of the mineral it was derived from. Such a reproduction is known as a pseudomorph. Talc seldom forms crystals of its own, and thus these pseudomorphs after another mineral are of interest. On occasion, some of the sheet-like formations, known as foliated talc, are brilliant and make showy mineral specimens.

The mineral carving enthusiast finds talc a worthy medium. It is soft, tough and durable. A fine-grained piece of soapstone, free from hard inclusions, is an excellent carving medium. It has been used by many cultures for various types of carving. Often the pure white form is used, but at times color patterns are taken advantage of. The Eskimo of our far north uses talc as a carving medium, producing carvings of various animals. He also uses it for the dish-like lamp in which he burns blubber to produce light and heat.

Many of the "jade" articles that have originated in the Orient are a talc dyed green. Obviously these are a form of fraud, but these carvings are usually made of an excellent grade of talc, and show fine workmanship. Even though they are not jade as represented, they can be considered as good art.

The American deserts have many deposits of talc. Most of these are concentrated in the Mojave Desert of Southern California and western Nevada. The Death Valley region is especially endowed, and a number of mines there are presently being worked. Some of these are within the Monument itself. These are legal mines, having been worked before the Monument was created. Many other locations, throughout the world, produce talc for the above uses, as well as others.

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# Letters to the Editor

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## New Mexico Subscriber . . .

I have lived in New Mexico for all but the first six of my 70 years, so I did not have to cut my teeth gnawing on a pistol barrel but I came close to being raised on a diet of lost mines and buried treasures. I've read Twit-chell, Bancroft and Prince to name a few of the historians, as well as all the contemporaries I could lay hands on, so it may sound odd that I never ran into *Desert* until on an exploring trip in Pretty Boy Floyd's Oklahoma Hills the spring of 1970, and have been a subscriber ever since.

I believe H. O. Weight's "Yuma Gold" induced Joe Rodriguez to write his "Lost Ledge," and I think most of us readers would like to see some more old-timers jar loose with facts and legends that never made the printed page.

JOHN C. BOYLE,  
Gallup, New Mexico

*Editor's Note: Well, old-timers, you heard what John said. Let's get some unpublished yarns in here!*

## Camping on the Desert . . .

I recently took my family on a camping trip to Anza-Borrego. The weather was nice, and no wind blowing. We camped east of Spit Mountain Campground outside the park.

I have reason to believe the nuggets are about a mile up in the hills from the trestle, but poor health prevented me from climbing too far up the hill.

That's only one location. I believe there are others out by the Superstition Hills. All outside the Anza-Borrego park and within 30 miles of the Salton Sea.

Anyway, we had a beautiful camping trip, and thanks for all those side trips you tell about in *Desert Magazine*.

PHIL GALLIAN,  
Handford, California

## A Pair of Kings . . .

In regard to getting rid of rattlesnakes, try getting a couple of king snakes.

VAUGHAN KNIGHT,  
Riverside, Calif.

## Mystery Marker . . .

In regards to the mystery marker in March "Letters to the Editor," there is an identical marker on the California-Nevada boundary near Verdi, Nevada, and on the side of the original highway from Reno to Truckee, Calif. This is also the old Donner Trail.

On the north side of this marker is also Oregon, 170 miles and 47 Links, which is a surveyors measurement. The Oregon 612 miles on the marker in Mr. Langjahr's letter no doubt also indicates the distance from that point to Oregon along the California-Nevada border. Anyway, both measurements correspond with map measurements.

Now I am very interested to know if there is also such a marker where the California-Nevada line abuts the Oregon line. That sounds like a good project.

FRED G. REICHMAN,  
Reno, Nevada

## And More . . .

Upon reading the March issue, I have noted with interest the letter from Carl H. Langjahr about the state line monument.

From the information shown in his sketches it is, I think, without doubt the southern terminal of the Von Schmidt Line of 1873. He did not give the approximate location, but I would offer a guess not more than three miles north of the present line and about six to eight miles south of Davis Dam.

In addition, there was another, the Baker Line of 1882 which ran between the present and Von Schmidt's. These can be found on the topo maps—Ash Meadow and Chloride Cliff.

For several years I have been trying to run down what happened to an old marker that was along the old road just west of the State Line in So. Lake Tahoe; would guess 3/8 mile, which I think could have been the northern monument of Von Schmidt's Line.

DAVE CURSON,  
Sacramento, Calif.

*Editor's Note: Our thanks to Readers John T. Dillard of Monroe, Oregon, and Robert Abraham of Flagstaff, Arizona, who also wrote in to identify the Mystery Marker.*

## Two Monuments . . .

I would like to comment on two articles in the March issue of *Desert*.

In "Monument to Surrender," the author suggests the origin of the name Geronimo. It is simply the Spanish equivalent of Jerome.

The monument shown on Page 46 was placed there by A. W. Von Schmidt who, in the 1870's, had a contract with the U. S. Government to survey the California-Nevada boundary from the Oregon border to the junction of the 35th parallel of latitude and the Colorado River. A similar cast-iron monument is on the boundary line and the Dog Valley road about a half-mile northwest of Verdi, Nevada.

VINCENT P. GIANELLA,  
Auburn, California

# Calendar of Events

MAY 4 & 5, Western Collectable Show sponsored by the California Barbed Wire Collectors Association, Chico Grange Hall, Nord Avenue at Rodeo, Chico, Calif. Free admission, door prizes.

MAY 10, 11 & 18, 19, Redlands Great Y Circus, YMCA, 500 E. Citrus Ave., Redlands, California. Performances 7:30 p.m. all four days; matinee at 1:00 p.m. on the 19th. Circus tickets at YMCA. For information phone (714) 792-7586.

MAY 11 & 12, Out-of-Doors Arts & Crafts Show, sponsored by the Pahrump Art Society, Calvada Inn, Pahrump, Nevada 89401.

MAY 18 & 19, Calaveras Gem & Mineral Society's Annual Gem Show, in conjunction with the Calaveras Jumping Frog Jubilee and County Fair, County Fairgrounds, south of Angels Camp, California Highway 49.

MAY 18 & 19, 27th Annual May Festival of Gems sponsored by the Glendale Lapidary & Gem Society. Glendale Civic Auditorium, 1401 Verdugo Rd., Glendale, Calif. Dealer space filled.

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JUNE 28, 29 & 30, California Federation of Mineralogical Societies, celebrating their 35th Anniversary, join with the Gem & Mineral Society of San Mateo County, Calif., celebrating their 25th Anniversary, for their annual Convention and Show, San Mateo County Fair & Exposition Center, San Mateo Calif. Internationally known speakers, lecturers and craftsmen; special exhibits, banquet Saturday night, June 29th. Camping facilities in fairgrounds.



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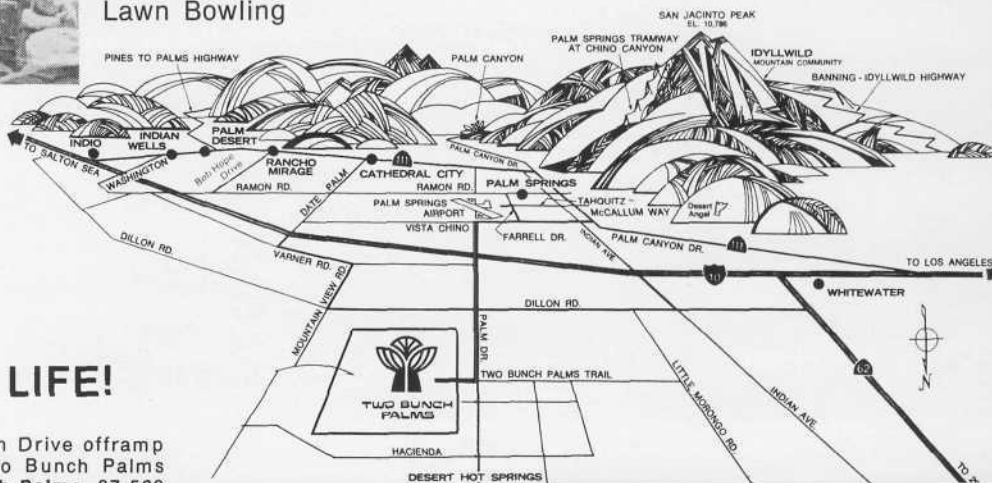
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